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PREFACES,

BIOGRAPHICAL

AND

CRITICAL,

TO THE

WORKS

OF THE

ENGLISH POETS.

BY SAMUEL JOHNSON.

VOLUME THE THIRD.

LONDON:

PRINTED BY J. NICHOLS;

FOR C. BATHURST, J. BUCKLAND, W. STRAHAN, J. RIVINGTON AND SONS, T. DAVIES, T. PAYNE, L. DAVIS, W. OWEN, B. WHITE, S. CROWDER, T. CASLON, T. LONGMAN, B. LAW, E. AND C. DILLY, J. DODSLEY, H. BALDWIN, J. WILKIE, J. ROBSON, J. JOHNSON, T. LOWNDES, T. BECKET, G. ROBINSON, T. CADELL, W. DAVIS, J. NICHOLS, F. NEWBERY, T. EVANS, J. RIDLEY, R. BALDWIN, G. NICOL, LEIGH AND SOTHEBY, J. BEW, N. CONANT, J. MURRAY, W. FOX, J. BOWEN.

M DCC LXXIX.

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dle, the ſon of Eraſmus Dryden of Tichmerſh; who was the third ſon of Sir Eraſmus Dryden, Baronet, of Canons Aſhby. All theſe places are in Northamptonſhire; but the original ſtock of the family was in the county of Huntingdon.

He is reported by his laſt biographer, Derrick, to have inherited from his father an eſtate of two hundred a year, and to have been bred, as was ſaid, an Anabaptiſt. For either of theſe particulars no authority is given. Such a fortune ought to have ſecured him from that poverty which ſeems always to have oppreſſed him; or, if he had waſted it, to have made him aſhamed of publiſhing his neceſſities. But though he had

many

many enemies, who undoubtedly examined his life with a ſcrutiny ſufficiently malicious, I do not remember that he is ever charged with waſte of his patrimony, or conſidered as a deſerter from another religion. I am therefore inclined to believe that Derrick was miſinformed.

From Weſtminſter School, where he was inſtructed as one of the king's ſcholars by Dr. Buſby, whom he long after continued to reverence, he was in 1650 elected to one of the Weſtminſter ſcholarſhips at Cambridge.

Of his ſchool performances has appeared only a poem on the death of Lord Haſtings, compoſed with great ambition of ſuch conceits as, notwith-

ſtanding the reformation begun by Waller and Denham, the example of Cowley ſtill kept in reputation. Lord Haſtings died of the ſmall-pox, and his poet has made of the puſtules firſt roſebuds, and then gems; at laſt exalts them into ſtars; and ſays,

No comet need foretell his change drew on,
Whoſe corps might ſeem a conſtellation.

At the univerſity he does not appear to have been eager of poetical diſtinction, or to have laviſhed his early wit either on fictitious ſubjects or publick occaſions. He probably conſidered that he who purpoſed to be an author, ought firſt to be a ſtudent. He obtained, whatever was the reaſon, no fellowſhip

in the College. Why he was excluded, cannot now be known, and it is vain to gueſs: had he thought himſelf injured, he knew how to complain. In the Life of Plutarch he mentions his education in the College with gratitude; but in a prologue at Oxford, he has theſe lines:

Oxford to him a dearer name ſhall be
Than his own mother-univerſity;
Thebes did his rude unknowing youth engage;
He chooſes Athens in his riper age.

It was not till the death of Cromwel, in 1658, that he became a publick candidate for fame, by publiſhing *Heroick Stanzas on the late Lord Protector*; which, compared with the verſes of

Sprat and Waller on the ſame occaſion, were ſufficient to raiſe great expectations of the riſing poet.

When the king was reſtored, Dryden, like the other panegyriſts of uſurpation, changed his opinion, or his profeſſion, and publiſhed ASTREA REDUX, *a poem on the happy reſtoration and return of his moſt ſacred Majeſty King Charles the Second.*

The reproach of inconſtancy was on this occaſion, ſhared with ſuch numbers, that it produced neither hatred nor diſgrace; if he changed, he changed with the nation. It was, however, not totally forgotten when his reputation raiſed him enemies.

The

The ſame year he praiſed the new king in a ſecond poem on his reſtoration. In the ASTRÆA was the line,

An horrid *ſtilneſs* firſt *invades* the *ear*,
And in that ſilence we a tempeſt fear:

for which he was perſecuted with perpetual ridicule, perhaps with more than was deſerved. *Silence* is indeed mere privation; and, ſo conſidered, cannot *invade*; but privation likewiſe certainly is *darkneſs*, and probably *cold*; yet poetry has never been refuſed the right of aſcribing effects or agency to them as to poſitive powers. No man ſcruples to ſay that *darkneſs* hinders him from his work; or that *cold* has killed the plants. Death is alſo privation, yet who has

made any difficulty of aſſigning to Death a dart and the power of ſtriking?

In ſettling the order of his works, there is ſome difficulty; for, even when they are important enough to be formally offered to a patron, he does not commonly date his dedication; the time of writing and publiſhing is not always the ſame; nor can the firſt editions be eaſily found, if even from them could be obtained the neceſſary information.

The time at which his firſt play was exhibited is not certainly known, becauſe it was not printed till it was ſome years afterwards altered and revived; but if the plays are printed in the order in which they were written, from the dates

dates of ſome, thoſe of others may be inferred; and thus it may be collected that in 1663, in the thirty-ſecond year of his life, he commenced a writer for the ſtage; compelled undoubtedly by neceſſity, for he appears never to have loved that exerciſe of his genius, or to have much pleaſed himſelf with his own dramas.

Of the ſtage, when he had once invaded it, he kept poſſeſſion for many years; not indeed without the competition of rivals who ſometimes prevailed, or the cenſure of criticks, which was often poignant and often juſt; but with ſuch a degree of reputation as made him at leaſt ſecure of being heard, whatever might

might be the final determination of the publick.

His firſt piece was a comedy called the *Wild Gallant*. He began with no happy auguries; for his performance was ſo much diſapproved, that he was compelled to recall it, and change it from its imperfect ſtate to the form in which it now appears, and which is yet ſufficiently defective to vindicate the criticks.

I wiſh that there were no neceſſity of following the progreſs of his theatrical fame, or tracing the meanders of his mind through the whole ſeries of his dramatick performances; and indeed there is the leſs, as they do not appear in the collection to which this narration

is

is to be annexed. It will be fit however to enumerate them, and to take eſpecial notice of thoſe that are diſtinguiſhed by any peculiarity intrinſick or concomitant; for the compoſition and fate of eight and twenty dramas include too much of a poetical life to be omitted.

In 1664 he publiſhed the *Rival Ladies*, which he dedicated to the earl of Orrery, a man of high reputation both as a writer and a ſtateſman. In this play he made his eſſay of dramatick rhyme, which he defends in his dedication, with ſufficient certainty of a favourable hearing; for Orrery was himſelf a writer of rhyming tragedies.

He then joined with Sir Robert Howard in the *Indian Queen*, a tragedy in

in rhyme. The parts which either of them wrote are not diſtinguiſhed.

The *Indian Emperor* was publiſhed in 1667. It is a tragedy in rhyme, intended for a ſequel to *Howard's Indian Queen.* Of this connection notice was given to the audience by printed bills, diſtributed at the door; an expedient ſuppoſed to be ridiculed in the *Rehearſal,* when Bays tells how many reams he has printed, to inſtill into the audience ſome conception of his plot.

In this play is the deſcription of Night, which *Rymer* has made famous by preferring it to thoſe of all other poets.

The practice of making tragedies in rhyme was introduced ſoon after the Reſto-

Reſtoration, as it ſeems, by the earl of Orrery, in compliance with the opinion of Charles the Second, who had formed his taſte by the French theatre; and Dryden, who wrote, and made no difficulty of declaring that he wrote, only to pleaſe, and who perhaps knew that by his dexterity of verſification he was more likely to excel others in rhyme than without it, very readily adopted his maſter's preference. He therefore made rhyming tragedies, till, by the prevalence of manifeſt propriety, he ſeems to have grown aſhamed of making them any longer.

To this play is prefixed a very vehement defence of dramatick rhyme, in confutation of the preface to the *Duke of Lerma*,

Lerma, in which Sir Robert Howard had cenſured it.

In 1667, he publiſhed *Annus Mirabilis*, the *Year of Wonders*, which ſeems to be one of his moſt elaborate works.

It is addreſſed to Sir Robert Howard by a letter, which is not properly a dedication; and, writing to a poet, he has interſperſed many critical obſervations, of which ſome are common, and ſome perhaps ventured without much conſideration. He began, even now, to exerciſe the domination of conſcious genius, by recommending his own performance: "I am ſatisfied that as the Prince and "General [Rupert and Monk] are incomparably the beſt ſubjects I ever "had, ſo what I have written on them

"is

"is much better than what I have per-
"formed on any other. As I have en-
"deavoured to adorn my poem with
"noble thoughts, ſo much more to
"expreſs thoſe thoughts with elocu-
"tion."

It is written in quatrains, or heroick ſtanzas of four lines; a meaſure which he had learned from the *Gondibert* of Davenant, and which he then thought the moſt majeſtick that the Engliſh language affords. Of this ſtanza he mentions the encumbrances, encreaſed as they were by the exactneſs which the age required. It was, throughout his life, very much his cuſtom to recommend his works, by repreſentation of the difficulties that he had encountered, without

out appearing to have ſufficiently conſidered, that where there is no difficulty there is no praiſe.

There ſeems to be in the conduct of Sir Robert Howard and Dryden towards each other, ſomething that is not now eaſily to be explained. Dryden, in his dedication to the earl of Orrery, had defended dramatick rhyme; and Howard, in the preface to a collection of plays, had cenſured his opinion. Dryden vindicated himſelf in his *Dialogue on Dramatick Poetry*; Howard, in his Preface to the *Duke of Lerma*, animadverted on the Vindication; and Dryden, in a Preface to the *Indian Emperor*, replied to the Animadverſions with great aſperity, and almoſt with contumely.

The

The dedication to this play is dated the year in which the *Annus Mirabilis* was publiſhed. Here appears a ſtrange inconſiſtency; but Langbaine affords ſome help, by relating that the anſwer to Howard was not publiſhed in the firſt edition of the play, but was added when it was afterwards reprinted; and as the *Duke of Lerma* did not appear till 1668, the ſame year in which the Dialogue was publiſhed, there was time enough for enmity to grow up between authors, who, writing both for the theatre, were naturally rivals.

He was now ſo much diſtinguiſhed, that in 1668 he ſucceeded Sir William Davenant as poet-laureat. The ſalary of the laureat had been raiſed in favour

of Jonſon, by Charles the Firſt, from an hundred marks to one hundred pounds a year, and a tierce of wine; a revenue in thoſe days not inadequate to the conveniencies of life.

The ſame year he publiſhed his Eſſay on Dramatick Poetry, an elegant and inſtructive dialogue; in which we are told by Prior, that the principal character is meant to repreſent the duke of Dorſet. This work ſeems to have given Addiſon a model for his Dialogues upon Medals.

Secret Love, or the Maiden Queen, is a tragi-comedy. In the preface he diſcuſſes a curious queſtion, whether a poet can judge well of his own productions: and determines very juſtly, that, of the

plan and diſpoſition, and all that can be reduced to principles of ſcience the author may depend upon his own opinion; but that, in thoſe parts where fancy predominates, ſelf-love may eaſily deceive. He might have obſerved, that what is good only becauſe it pleaſes, cannot be pronounced good till it has been found to pleaſe.

Sir Martin Marall is a comedy, publiſhed without preface or dedication, and at firſt without the name of the author. Langbaine charges it, like moſt of the reſt, with plagiariſm; and obſerves that the ſong is tranſlated from Voiture, allowing however that both the ſenſe and meaſure are exactly obſerved.

The Tempeſt is an alteration of Shakeſpeare's play, made by Dryden in conjunction with Davenant, "whom, ſays "he, I found of ſo quick a fancy, that "nothing was propoſed to him in which "he could not ſuddenly produce a "thought extremely pleaſant and ſur-"priſing; and thoſe firſt thoughts of "his, contrary to the Latin proverb, "were not always the leaſt happy; and "as his fancy was quick, ſo likewiſe "were the products of it remote and "new. He borrowed not of any other, "and his imaginations were ſuch as "could not eaſily enter into any other "man."

The effect produced by the conjunction of theſe two powerful minds was,

that to Shakeſpeare's monſter Caliban is added a ſiſter-monſter Sicorax; and a woman, who, in the original play, had never ſeen a man, is in this brought acquainted with a man that had never ſeen a woman.

About this time, in 1673, Dryden ſeems to have had his quiet much diſturbed by the ſucceſs of the *Empreſs of Morocco*, a tragedy written in rhyme by *Elkanah Settle*; which was ſo much applauded, as to make him think his ſupremacy of reputation in ſome danger. Settle had not only been proſperous on the ſtage, but in the confidence of ſucceſs had publiſhed his play, with ſculptures and a preface of defiance. Here was one offence added to another; and,

for the laſt blaſt of inflammation, it was acted at Whitehall by the court-ladies.

Dryden could not now repreſs theſe emotions, which he called indignation, and others jealouſy; but wrote upon the play and the dedication ſuch a criticiſm as malignant impatience could pour out in haſte.

Of Settle he gives this character. "He's an animal of a moſt deplored "underſtanding, without converſation. "His being is in a twilight of ſenſe, "and ſome glimmering of thought, "which he can never faſhion into wit "or Engliſh. His ſtile is boiſterous "and rough-hewn, his rhyme incor-"rigibly lewd, and his numbers perpe-"tually harſh and ill-ſounding. The

"little

"little talent which he has is fan-
"cy. He ſometimes labours with a
"thought; but, with the pudder he
"makes to bring it into the world, 'tis
"commonly ſtill-born; ſo that, for want
"of learning and elocution, he will ne-
"ver be able to expreſs any thing either
"naturally or juſtly!"

This is not very decent; yet this is one of the pages in which criticiſm prevails moſt over brutal fury. He proceeds. "He has a heavy hand at fools,
"and a great felicity in writing nonſenſe
"for them. Fools they will be in ſpite
"of him. His King, his two Empreſſes,
"his villain, and his ſub-villain, nay
"his hero, have all a certain natural
"caſt of the father—their folly was

" born and bred in them, and ſomething
" of the Elkanah will be viſible."

This is Dryden's general declamation; I will not withold from the reader a particular remark. Having gone thro' the firſt act, he ſays, " To conclude this
" act with the moſt rumbling piece of
" nonſenſe ſpoken yet,

" To flatt'ring lightning our feign'd
" ſmiles conform,
" Which back'd with thunder do but
" gild a ſtorm.

" *Conform a ſmile to lightning*, make a
" *ſmile* imitate *lightning*, and *flattering*
" *lightning*: lightning ſure is a threaten-
" ing thing. And this lightning muſt
" *gild a ſtorm*. Now if I muſt conform
" my ſmiles to lightning, then my
" ſmiles

"ſmiles muſt gild a ſtorm too: to *gild*
"with *ſmiles* is a new invention of gild-
"ing. And gild a ſtorm by being *backed*
"*with thunder*. Thunder is part of the
"ſtorm; ſo one part of the ſtorm muſt
"help to *gild* another part, and help
"by *backing*; as if a man would gild a
"thing the better for being backed, or
"having a load upon his back. So
"that here is *gilding* by *conforming*,
"*ſmiling*, *lightning*, *backing*, and *thun-*
"*dering*. The whole is as if I ſhould
"ſay thus, I will make my counterfeit
"ſmiles look like a flattering ſtone-
"horſe, which, being backed with a
"trooper, does but gild the battle. I
"am miſtaken if nonſenſe is not here
"pretty thick ſown. Sure the poet

"writ

"writ theſe two lines aboard ſome "ſmack in a ſtorm, and, being ſea-ſick, "ſpewed up a good lump of clotted "nonſenſe at once."

Here is perhaps a ſufficient ſpecimen; but as the pamphlet, though Dryden's, has never been thought worthy of republication, and is not eaſily to be found, it may gratify curioſity to quote it more largely.

Whene'er ſhe bleeds,
He no ſeverer a damnation needs,
That dares pronounce the ſentence of her death,
Than the infection that attends that breath.

"*That attends that breath.*—The poet "is at *breath* again; *breath* can never

"'ſcape

" 'ſcape him; and here he brings in *a*
" *breath* that muſt be *infectious* with *pro-*
" *nouncing* a ſentence; and this ſentence
" is not to be pronounced till the con-
" demned party *bleeds*; that is, ſhe muſt
" be executed firſt, and ſentenced after;
" and the *pronouncing* of this *ſentence*
" will be infectious; that is, others will
" catch the diſeaſe of that ſentence, and
" this infecting of others will torment
" a man's ſelf. The whole is thus;
" *when ſhe bleeds, thou needeſt no greater*
" *hell or torment to thyſelf, than infecting*
" *of others by pronouncing a ſentence upon*
" *her.* What hodge-podge does he
" make here! Never was Dutch grout
" ſuch clogging, thick, indigeſtible
" ſtuff. But this is but a taſte to ſtay
" the

" the ſtomach; we ſhall have a more " plentiful meſs preſently.

" Now to diſh up the poet's broth, " that I promiſed:

For when we're dead, and our freed ſouls enlarg'd,
Of nature's groſſer burden we're diſcharg'd,
Then gently, as a happy lover's ſigh,
Like wand'ring meteors thro' the air we'll fly,
And in our airy walk, as ſubtle gueſts,
We'll ſteal into our cruel fathers breaſts,
There read their ſouls, and track each paſſion's ſphere:
See how revenge moves there, ambition here.

And

And in their orbs view the dark characters
Of ſieges, ruins, murders, blood and wars.
We'll blot out all thoſe hideous draughts, and write
Pure and white forms; then with a radiant light
Their breaſts encircle, till their paſſions be
Gentle as nature in its infancy:
Till ſoften'd by our charms their furies ceaſe,
And their revenge reſolves into a peace.
Thus by our death their quarrel ends,
Whom living we made foes, dead we'll make friends.

"If this be not a very liberal meſs, I "will refer myſelf to the ſtomach of "any

" any moderate gueſt. And a rare meſs
" it is, far excelling any Weſtminſter
" white-broth. It is a kind of gibblet
" porridge, made of the gibblets of a
" couple of young geeſe, ſtodged full
" of *meteors, orbs, ſpheres, track, hideous*
" *draughts, dark characters, white forms,*
" and *radiant light*, deſigned not only to
" pleaſe appetite, and indulge luxury;
" but it is alſo phyſical, being an ap-
" proved medicine to purge choler: for
" it is propounded by Morena, as a re-
" ceipt to cure their fathers of their
" choleric humours: and were it writ-
" ten in characters as barbarous as the
" words, might very well paſs for a
" doctor's bill. To conclude, it is
" porridge, 'tis a receipt, 'tis a pig with
" a pud-

"a pudding in the belly, 'tis I know
"not what: for, certainly, never any
"one that pretended to write ſenſe had
"the impudence before to put ſuch
"ſtuff, as this, into the mouths of thoſe
"that were to ſpeak it before an au-
"dience, whom he did not take to be
"all fools; and after that to print it
"too, and expoſe it to the examination
"of the world. But let us ſee, what
"we can make of this ſtuff:

For when we're dead, and our freed ſouls
enlarg'd—

"Here he tells us what it is to be *dead*;
"it is to have *our freed ſouls ſet free*.
"Now if to have a ſoul ſet free is to be
"dead, then to have a *freed ſoul* ſet free,
"is to have a dead man die.

Then

Then gentle, as a happy lover's ſigh—

" They two like one *ſigh*, and that one
" *ſigh* like two wandering meteors,

—ſhall flie through the air—

" That is, they ſhall mount above like
" falling ſtars, or elſe they ſhall ſkip
" like two Jacks with lanthorns, or Will
" with a wiſp, and Madge with a candle.

And in their airy walk ſteal into their cruel fathers breaſts, like ſubtle gueſts. So
" that their *fathers breaſts* muſt be in
" an *airy walk*, an airy *walk* of a *flier*.
" *And there they will read their ſouls, and*
" *track the ſpheres of their paſſions.* That
" is, theſe walking fliers, Jack with a
" lanthorn, &c. will put on his ſpecta-
" cles and fall a *reading ſouls*, and put
" on his pumps and fall a *tracking of*
" *ſpheres*;

"*ſpheres*; ſo that he will read and run,
" walk and fly at the ſame time! Oh!
" Nimble Jack. *Then he will ſee, how*
" *revenge here, how ambition there*—The
" birds will hop about. *And then view*
" *the dark characters of ſieges, ruins, mur-*
" *ders, blood, and wars, in their orbs:*
" *Track the characters* to their forms!
" Oh! rare ſport for Jack. Never was
" place ſo full of game as theſe breaſts!
" You cannot ſtir but you fluſh a ſphere,
" ſtart a character, or unkennel an orb!"

Settle's is ſaid to have been the firſt play embelliſhed with ſculptures; thoſe ornaments ſeem to have given poor Dryden great diſturbance. He tries however to eaſe his pain, by venting his malice in a parody,

" The poet has not only been ſo im-
" pudent to expoſe all this ſtuff, but ſo
" arrogant to defend it with an epiſtle;
" like a ſaucy booth-keeper, that, when he
" had put a cheat upon the people, would
" wrangle and fight with any that would
" not like it, or would offer to diſcover
" it: for which arrogance our poet re-
" ceives this correction; and, to jerk
" him a little the ſharper, I will not
" tranſpoſe his verſe, but by the help
" of his own words tranſ-non-ſenſe ſenſe,
" that, by my ſtuff, people may judge
" the better what his is.

" Great Boy, thy tragedy and ſculptures
" done
" From preſs, and plates in fleets do
" homeward come:

" And in ridiculous and humble pride,
" Their courſe in ballad-ſingers baſkets
" guide,
" Whoſe greaſy twigs do all new beau-
" ties take,
" From the gay ſhews thy dainty ſculp-
" tures make.
" Thy lines a meſs of rhiming nonſenſe
" yield,
" A ſenſeleſs tale, with flattering fuſtian
" fill'd.
" No grain of ſenſe does in one line
" appear,
" Thy words big bulks of boiſt'rous
" bombaſt bear.
" With noiſe they move, and from
" players mouths rebound,
" When their tongues dance to thy
" words empty ſound.

" By thee inſpir'd the rumbling verſes
" roll,
" As if that rhime and bombaſt lent a
" ſoul:
" And with that ſoul they ſeem taught
" duty too,
" To huffing words does humble non-
" ſenſe bow,
" As if it would thy worthleſs worth
" enhance,
" To th' loweſt rank of fops thy praiſe
" advance;
" To whom, by inſtinct, all thy ſtuff is
" dear;
" Their loud claps echo to the theatre.
" From breaths of fools thy commen-
" dation ſpreads,
" Fame ſings thy praiſe with mouths
" of loggerheads.

" With

"With noiſe and laughing each thy
"fuſtian greets,
"'Tis clapt by quires of empty-headed
"cits,
"Who have their tribute ſent, and
"homage given,
"As men in whiſpers ſend loud noiſe
"to heaven.

"Thus I have daubed him with his
"own puddle: and now we are come
"from aboard his dancing, maſking, re-
"bounding, breathing fleet; and as if
"we had landed at Gotham, we meet
"nothing but fools and nonſenſe."

Such was the criticiſm to which the genius of Dryden could be reduced, between rage and terrour; rage with little

provocation, and terrour with little danger. To see the highest minds thus levelled with the meanest, may produce some solace to the consciousness of weakness, and some mortification to the pride of wisdom. But let it be remembered, that minds are not levelled in their powers but when they are first levelled in their desires. Dryden and Settle had both placed their happiness in the claps of multitudes.

The *Mock Astrologer*, a comedy, is dedicated to the illustrious duke of Newcastle, whom he courts by adding to his praises those of his lady, not only as a lover but a partner of his studies. It is unpleasing to think how many names, once celebrated, are since forgotten.

Of

Of Newcaſtle's works nothing is now known but his treatiſe on Horſemanſhip.

The Preface ſeems very elaborately written, and contains many juſt remarks on the Fathers of the Engliſh drama. Shakeſpeare's plots, he ſays, are in the hundred novels of *Cinthio*; thoſe of Beaumont and Fletcher in Spaniſh ſtories; Jonſon only made them for himſelf. His criticiſms upon tragedy, comedy, and farce, are judicious and profound. He endeavours to defend the immorality of ſome of his comedies by the example of former writers; which is only to ſay, that he was not the firſt nor perhaps the greateſt offender. Againſt thoſe that accuſed him of pla-

giariſm, he alleges a favourable expreſſion of the King: "He only deſired "that they, who accuſe me of thefts, "would ſteal him plays like mine;" and then relates how much labour he ſpends in fitting for the Engliſh ſtage what he borrows from others.

Tyrannick Love, or the Virgin Martyr, was another tragedy in rhyme, conſpicuous for many paſſages of ſtrength and elegance, and many of empty noiſe and ridiculous turbulence. The rants of Maximin have been always the ſport of criticiſm; and were at length, if his own confeſſion may be truſted, the ſhame of the writer.

Of this play he takes care to let the reader know, that it was contrived and written

written in ſeven weeks. Want of time was often his excuſe, or perhaps ſhortneſs of time was his private boaſt in the form of an apology.

It was written before *The Conqueſt of Granada*, but publiſhed after it. The deſign is to recommend piety. "I "conſidered that pleaſure was not the "only end of poeſy, and that even the "inſtructions of morality were not ſo "wholly the buſineſs of a poet, as that "precepts and examples of piety were "to be omitted; for to leave that em-"ployment altogether to the clergy, "were to forget that religion was firſt "taught in verſe which the lazineſs "or dulneſs of ſucceeding prieſthood "turned afterwards into proſe." Thus fooliſh-

foolishly could Dryden write, rather than not shew his malice to the parsons.

The two parts of the *Conquest of Granada* are written with a seeming determination to glut the publick with dramatick wonders; to exhibit in its highest elevation a theatrical meteor of incredible love and impossible valour, and to leave no room for a wilder flight to the extravagance of posterity. All the rays of romantick heat, whether amorous or warlike, glow in Almanzor by a kind of concentration. He is above all laws; he is exempt from all restraints; he ranges the world at will, and governs wherever he appears. He fights without enquiring the cause, and loves in spite of the obligations of justice, of rejection

jection by his miſtreſs, and of prohibition from the dead. Yet the ſcenes are, for the moſt part, delightful; they exhibit a kind of illuſtrious depravity, and majeſtick madneſs: ſuch as, if it is ſometimes deſpiſed, is often reverenced, and in which the ridiculous is mingled with the aſtoniſhing.

In the Epilogue to the ſecond part of the *Conqueſt of Granada*, Dryden indulges his favourite pleaſure of diſcrediting his predeceſſors; and this Epilogue he has defended by a long poſtſcript. He had promiſed a ſecond dialogue, in which he ſhould more fully treat of the virtues and faults of the Engliſh poets, who have written in the dramatick, epick, or lyrick way. This promiſe

was

was never formally performed; but, with reſpect to the dramatick writers, he has given us in his prefaces, and in this poſtſcript, ſomething equivalent; but his purpoſe being to exalt himſelf by the compariſon, he ſhews faults diſtinctly, and only praiſes excellence in general terms.

A play thus written, in profeſſed defiance of probability, naturally drew down upon itſelf the vultures of the theatre. One of the criticks that attacked it was *Martin Clifford*, to whom *Sprat* addreſſed the Life of Cowley, with ſuch veneration of his critical powers as might naturally excite great expectations of inſtruction from his remarks. But let honeſt credulity be-

ware of receiving characters from contemporary writers. Clifford's remarks, by the favour of Dr. *Piercy*, were at laſt obtained; and, that no man may ever want them more, I will extract enough to ſatisfy all reaſonable deſire.

In the firſt Letter, his obſervation is only general: "You do live, ſays he, "in as much ignorance and darkneſs "as you did in the womb: your "writings are like a Jack of all trades "ſhop; they have variety, but nothing "of value; and if thou art not the "dulleſt plant-animal that ever the earth "produced, all that I have converſed "with are ſtrangely miſtaken in thee"

In the ſecond, he tells him that Almanzor is not more copied from Achilles than

than from Ancient Piſtol. "But I am
"ſays he, ſtrangely miſtaken if I have
"not ſeen this very *Almanzor* of your
"in ſome diſguiſe about this town, and
"paſſing under another name. Pr'ythee
"tell me true, was not this Huffcap
"once the *Indian Emperor*, and at ano-
"ther time did he not call himſelf
"*Maximin?* Was not *Lyndaraxa* once
"called *Almeria*, I mean under *Monte-*
"*zuma* the Indian Emperor. I proteſt
"and vow they are either the ſame, or
"ſo alike that I cannot, for my heart,
"diſtinguiſh one from the other. You
"are therefore a ſtrange unconſcionable
"thief; thou art not content to ſteal
"from others, but doſt rob thy poor
"wretched ſelf too."

Now

Now was *Settle's* time to take his revenge. He wrote a vindication of his own lines; and, if he is forced to yield any thing, makes repriſals upon his enemy. To ſay that his anſwer is equal to the cenſure is no high commendation. To expoſe Dryden's method of analyſing his expreſſions, he tries the ſame experiment upon the deſcription of the ſhips in the *Indian Emperor*, of which however he does not deny the excellence; but intends to ſhew, that by ſtudied miſconſtruction every thing may be equally repreſented as ridiculous. After ſo much of Dryden's elegant animadverſions, juſtice requires that ſomething of Settle's ſhould be exhibited. The following obſervations are therefore

fore extracted from a quarto pamphl
of ninety-five pages:

" *Fate after him below with pain did move*
" *And victory could ſcarce keep pace above*

" Theſe two lines, if he can ſhew
" me any ſenſe or thought in, or any
" thing but bombaſt and noiſe, he ſhall
" make me believe every word in his
" obſervations on Morocco ſenſe.

" In the *Empreſs of Morocco* were theſe
" lines:

" *I'll travel then to ſome remoter ſphere,*
" *'Till I find out new worlds, and crown*
" *you there.*

" On which Dryden made this remark:

" *I believe our learned author takes a*
" *ſphere for a country: the ſphere of Mo-*
" *rocco,*

" *rocco, as if Morocco were the globe of*
" *earth and water; but a globe is no*
" *ſphere neither, by his leave,*" &c. So
" *ſphere* muſt not be ſenſe, unleſs it re-
" late to a circular motion about a
" globe, in which ſenſe the aſtronomers
" uſe it. I would deſire him to ex-
" pound theſe lines in *Granada:*

" *I'll to the turrets of the palace go,*
" *And add new fire to thoſe that fight be-*
" *low.*
" *Thence, hero-like, with torches by my*
" *ſide,*
" (*Far be the omen tho'*) *my Love I'll*
" *guide.*

" *No, like his better fortune I'll appear,*
" *With open arms, looſe vail and flow-*
" *ing hair,*
" *Juſt flying forward from my rowling*
" *ſphere.*

" I wonder, if he be ſo ſtrict, how h
" dares make ſo bold with *ſphere* him
" ſelf, and be ſo critical in other men
" writings. Fortune is fancied ſtanding
" on a globe, not on a *ſphere*, as he told
" us, in the firſt Act.

" Becauſe *Elkanah's Similies are the*
" *moſt unlike things to what they are com-*
" *pared in the world*, I'll venture to
" ſtart a ſimile in his *Annus Mirabilis:*
" he gives this poetical deſcription of
" the ſhip called the *London:*

" *The*

" *The goodly London in her gallant trim,*
" *The Phenix-daughter of the vanquiſht*
" *old,*
" *Like a rich bride doſs to the ocean ſwim,*
" *And on her ſhadow rides in floating gold.*
" *Her flag aloft ſpread ruffling in the*
" *wind,*
" *And ſanguine ſtreamers ſeem'd the flood*
" *to fire:*
" *The weaver, charm'd with what his loom*
" *deſign'd,*
" *Goes on to ſea, and knows not to retire.*
" *With roomy decks, her guns of mighty*
" *ſtrength,*
" *Whoſe low-laid mouths each mounting*
" *billow laves,*
" *Deep in her draught, and warlike in her*
" *length,*
" *She ſeems a ſea-waſp flying on the waves.*

" What a wonderful pother is here, to " make all theſe poetical beautifications " of a ſhip! that is, a *phenix* in the firſt " ſtanza, and but a *waſp* in the laſt: " nay, to make his humble compariſon " of a *waſp* more ridiculous, he does " not ſay it flies upon the waves as " nimbly as a waſp, or the like, but it " ſeemed a *waſp*. But our author at " the writing of this was not in his al- " titudes, to compare ſhips to floating " palaces, a compariſon to the purpoſe, " was a perfection he did not arrive to, " till his *Indian Emperor's* days. But " perhaps his ſimilitude has more in it " than we imagine; this ſhip had a " great many guns in her, and they, put " all together, made the ſting in the " waſp's

" waſp's tail: for this is all the reaſon
" I can gueſs, why it ſeem'd a *waſp*.
" But, becauſe we will allow him all we
" can to help out, let it be a *phenix ſea-*
" *waſp*, and the rarity of ſuch an ani-
" mal may do much towards the heigh-
" tening the fancy.

" It had been much more to his pur-
" poſe, if he had deſigned to render
" the ſenſeleſs play little, to have
" ſearched for ſome ſuch pedantry as
" this:

" *Two ifs ſcarce make one poſſibility.*
" *If juſtice will take all and nothing give,*
" *Juſtice, methinks, is not diſtributive.*
" *To die or kill you, is the alternative,*
" *Rather than take your life, I will not*
" *live.*

" Obſerve, how prettily our autl
" chops logick in heroick verſe. Th
" ſuch fuſtian canting words as *diſtri*
" *tive, alternative,* and *two ifs,* no m
" but himſelf would have come witl
" the noiſe of. But he's a man of g
" neral learning, and all comes into l
" play.

" 'Twould have done well too, if
" could have met with a rant or tw
" worth the obſervation: ſuch as,

" *Move ſwiftly, Sun, and fly a lover's pa*
" *Leave months and weeks behind th*
" *in thy race.*

" But ſurely the Sun, whether he fli
" a lover's or not a lover's pace, leav
" weeks and months, nay years too, b
" hind him in his race.

" Poor Robin, or any other of the " Philomathematicks, would have given " him ſatisfaction in the point.

" *If I could kill thee now, thy fate's ſo low,*
" *That I muſt ſtoop, ere I can give the blow.*
" *But mine is fixt ſo far above thy crown,*
" *That all thy men,*
" *Pil'd on thy back, can never pull it*
" *down.*

" Now where that is, Almanzor's fate " is fixt, I cannot gueſs; but wherever " it is, I believe Almanzor, and think " that all Abdalla's ſubjects, piled upon " one another, might not pull down his " fate ſo well as without piling: beſides, " I think Abdalla ſo wiſe a man, that " if Almanzor had told him piling his " men upon his back might do the feat,

" he would ſcarce bear ſuch a weight,
" for the pleaſure of the exploit: but
" it is a huff, and let Abdalla do it, if
" he dare.

The people like a headlong torrent go,
And every dam they break or overflow.
But, unoppos'd, they either loſe their force,
Or wind in volumes to their former courſe.

" A very pretty alluſion, contrary to all
" ſenſe or reaſon. Torrents, I take it,
" let them wind never ſo much, can
" never return to their former courſe,
" unleſs he can ſuppoſe that fountains
" can go upwards, which is impoſſible:
" nay more, in the foregoing page he
" tells us ſo too. A trick of a very un-
" faithful memory,

" *But*

" *But can no more than fountains upward*
" *flow.*

" Which of a *torrent*, which ſignifies a
" rapid ſtream, is much more impoſſible.
" Beſides, if he goes to quibble, and
" ſay that it is poſſible by art water
" may be made return, and the ſame
" water run twice in one and the ſame
" channel: then he quite confutes what
" he ſays; for, it is by being oppoſed,
" that it runs into its former courſe: for
" all engines that make water ſo return,
" do it by compulſion and oppoſition.
" Or, if he means a headlong torrent
" for a tide, which would be ridicu-
" lous, yet they do not wind in volumes,
" but come fore-right back (if their
" upright lies ſtraight to their former
" courſe),

" courſe), and that by oppoſition of the " ſea-water, that drives them back " again.

" And for fancy, when he lights of " any thing like it, 'tis a wonder if it be " not borrowed. As here, for example " of, I find this fanciful thought in his " *Ann. Mirab.*

Old father Thames rais'd up his reverend head;
But fear'd the fate of Simoeis would return;
Deep in his ooze he ſought his ſedgy bed;
And ſhrunk his waters back into his urn.

This is ſtolen from Cowley's *Davideis*, p. 9:

Swift

Swift Jordan ſtarted, and ſtrait backward fled,
Hiding amongſt thick reeds his aged head.

And when the Spaniards their aſſault begin,
At once beat thoſe without and thoſe within.

" This Almanzor ſpeaks of himſelf; and " ſure for one man to conquer an army " within the city, and another without " the city, at once, is ſomething diffi- " cult; but this flight is pardonable, to " ſome we meet with in *Granada*. Oſ- " min, ſpeaking of Almanzor:

Who, like a tempeſt that outrides the wind,
Made a juſt battle, ere the bodies join'd.

" Pray

" Pray what does this honourable per-
" ſon mean by a *tempeſt that outrides the*
" *wind!* A tempeſt that outrides itſelf.
" To ſuppoſe a tempeſt without wind,
" is as bad as ſuppoſing a man to walk
" without feet: for if he ſuppoſes the
" tempeſt to be ſomething diſtinct from
" the wind, yet as being the effect of
" wind only, to come before the cauſe
" is a little prepoſterous: ſo that, if he
" takes it one way, or if he takes it the
" other, thoſe two *ifs* will ſcarce make
" one *poſſibility*." Enough of Settle.

Marriage Alamode is a comedy, dedicated to the earl of Rocheſter; whom he acknowledges not only as the defender of his poetry, but the promoter

of

of his fortune. Langbaine places this play in 1673. The earl of Rocheſter therefore was the famous Wilmot, whom yet tradition always repreſents as an enemy to Dryden, and who is mentioned by him with ſome diſreſpect in the preface to Juvenal.

The Aſſignation, or Love in a Nunnery, a comedy, was driven off the ſtage, *againſt the opinion*, as the author ſays, *of the beſt judges*. It is dedicated, in a very elegant addreſs, to Sir Charles Sedley; in which he finds an opportunity for his uſual complaint of hard treatment, and unreaſonable cenſure.

Amboyna is a tiſſue of mingled dialogue in verſe and proſe, and was perhaps written in leſs time than the *Virgin*

gin Martyr; though the author thought not fit either oſtentatiouſly or mournfully to tell how little labour it coſt him or at how ſhort a warning he produced it. It was a temporary performance written in the time of the Dutch war, to inflame the nation againſt their enemies; to whom he hopes, as he declares in his Epilogue, to make his poetry not leſs deſtructive than that by which Tyrtæus of old animated the Spartans. This play was written in the ſecond Dutch war in 1673.

Troilus and Creſſida, is a play altered from Shakeſpeare; but ſo altered that even in Langbaine's opinion, *the laſt ſcene in the third act is a maſterpiece.* It is introduced by a diſcourſe on *the*

grounds

grounds of criticiſm in tragedy; to which I ſuſpect that Rymer's book had given occaſion.

The *Spaniſh Fryar* is a tragi-comedy, eminent for the happy coincidence and coalition of the two plots. As it was written againſt the Papiſts, it would naturally at that time have friends and enemies; and partly by the popularity which it obtained at firſt, and partly by the real power both of the ſerious and riſible part, it continued long a favourite of the publick.

It was Dryden's opinion, at leaſt for ſome time, and he maintains it in the dedication of this play, that the drama required an alternation of comick and tragick ſcenes, and that it is neceſſary

to

to mitigate by alleviations of merriment the preſſure of ponderous events, and the fatigue of toilſome paſſions. Whoever ſays he cannot perform both parts *is but half a writer for the ſtage.*

The *Duke of Guiſe*, a tragedy written in conjunction with Lee, as *Oedipus* had been before, ſeems to deſerve notice only for the offence which it gave to the remnant of the Covenanters, and in general to the enemies of the court, who attacked him with great violence, and were anſwered by him; though at laſt he ſeems to withdraw from the conflict, by transferring the greater part of the blame or merit to his partner. It happened that a contract had been made between them, by which they were

to

to join in writing a play; and *he happened*, ſays Dryden, *to claim the promiſe juſt upon the finiſhing of a poem, when I would have been glad of a little reſpite.*—Two *thirds of it belonged to him; and to me only the firſt ſcene of the play, the whole fourth act, and the firſt half or ſomewhat more of the fifth.*

This was a play written profeſſedly for the party of the duke of York, whoſe ſucceſſion was then oppoſed. A parallel is intended between the Leaguers of France and the Covenanters of England; and this intention produced the controverſy.

Albion and Albania is a muſical drama, or opera, written, like the *Duke of Guiſe*, againſt the Republicans. With what

ſucceſs it was performed, I have not found.

The State of Innocence and Fall of Man is termed by him an opera: it is rather a tragedy in heroick rhyme, but of which the perſonages are ſuch as cannot decently be exhibited on the ſtage. Some ſuch production was foreſeen by Marvel, who writes thus to Milton:

Or if a work ſo infinite be ſpann'd,
Jealous I was leſt ſome leſs ſkilful hand,
Such as diſquiet always what is well,
And by ill-imitating would excel,
Might hence preſume the whole creation's day,
To change in ſcenes, and ſhow it in a play.

It is another of his haſty productions; for the heat of his imagination raiſed it in a month.

This compoſition is addreſſed to the princeſs of Modena, then dutcheſs of York, in a ſtrain of flattery which diſgraces genius, and which it is wonderful that any man that knew the meaning of his own words could uſe without ſelf-deteſtation. It is an attempt to mingle earth and heaven, by praiſing human excellence in the language of religion.

The preface contains an apology for heroick verſe, and poetick licence; by which is meant not any liberty taken in contracting or extending words, but the uſe of bold fictions and ambitious figures.

The reaſon which he gives for printing what was never acted, cannot be overpaſſed: "I was induced to it in "my own defence, many hundred co-"pies of it being diſperſed abroad "without my knowledge or conſent, "and every one gathering new faults, "it became at length a libel againſt "me." Theſe copies as they gathered faults were apparently manuſcript; and he lived in an age very unlike ours, if many hundred copies of fourteen hundred lines were likely to be tranſcribed. An author has a right to print his own works, and needs not ſeek an apology in falſehood; but he that could bear to write the dedication felt no pain in writing the preface.

Aureng

Aureng Zebe is a tragedy founded on the actions of a great prince then reigning, but over nations not likely to employ their criticks upon the tranſactions of the Engliſh ſtage. If he had known and not liked his own character, our trade was not in thoſe times ſecure from his reſentment. His country is at ſuch a diſtance, that the manners might be ſafely falſified, and the incidents feigned; for remoteneſs of place is remarked, by Racine, to afford the ſame conveniencies to a poet as length of time.

This play is written in rhyme; and has the appearance of being the moſt elaborate of all the dramas. The perſonages are imperial; but the dialogue

is often domeſtick, and therefore ſuſceptible of ſentiments accommodated to familiar incidents. The complaint of life is celebrated, and there are many other paſſages that may be read with pleaſure.

This play is addreſſed to the earl of Mulgrave, afterwards duke of Buckingham, himſelf, if not a poet, yet a writer of verſes, and a critick. In this addreſs Dryden gave the firſt hints of his intention to write an epick poem. He mentions his deſign in terms ſo obſcure, that he ſeems afraid leſt his plan ſhould be purloined, as, he ſays, happened to him when he told it more plainly in his preface to Juvenal. "The deſign," ſays he, "you know is great, the ſtory Eng-

"liſh,

" liſh, and neither too near the preſent " times, nor too diſtant from them."

All for Love, or the World well loſt, a tragedy founded upon the ſtory of Antony and Cleopatra, he tells us, *is the only play which he wrote for himſelf*; the reſt were given to the people. It is by univerſal conſent accounted the work in which he has admitted the feweſt improprieties of ſtyle or character; but it has one fault equal to many, though rather moral than critical, that, by admitting the romantick omnipotence of Love, he has recommended as laudable and worthy of imitation that conduct which, through all ages, the good have cenſured as vitious, and the bad deſpiſed as fooliſh.

Of this play the prologue and the epilogue, though written upon the common topicks of malicious and ignorant criticiſm, and without any particular relation to the characters or incidents of the drama, are deſervedly celebrated for their elegance and ſpritelineſs.

Limberham, or the kind Keeper, is a comedy, which, after the third night, was prohibited as too indecent for the ſtage. What gave offence was in the printing, as the author ſays, altered or omitted. Dryden confeſſes that its indecency was objected to; but Langbaine, who yet ſeldom favours him, imputes its expulſion to reſentment, becauſe it *ſo much expoſed the keeping part of the town*.

Oedipus

Oedipus is a tragedy formed by Dryden and Lee, in conjunction, from the works of Sophocles, Seneca, and Corneille. Dryden planned the ſcenes, and compoſed the firſt and third acts.

Don Sebaſtian is commonly eſteemed either the firſt or ſecond of his dramatick performances. It is too long to be all acted, and has many characters and many incidents; and though it is not without ſallies of frantick dignity, and more noiſe than meaning, yet as it makes approaches to the poſſibilities of real life, and has ſome ſentiments which beam a ſtrong impreſſion, it continued long to attract attention. Amidſt the diſtreſſes of princes, and the viciſſitudes of empire, are inſerted ſeveral

veral ſcenes which the writer intended for comick; but which, I ſuppoſe, that age did not much commend, and this would not endure. There are, however, paſſages of excellence univerſally acknowledged; the diſpute and the reconciliation of Dorax and Sebaſtian has always been admired.

This play was firſt acted in 1690, after Dryden had for ſome years diſcontinued dramatick poetry.

Amphitryon is a comedy derived from Plautus and Moliere. The dedication is dated Oct. 1690. This play ſeems to have ſucceeded at its firſt appearance; and was, I think, long conſidered as a very diverting entertainment.

Cleomenes is a tragedy, only remarkable as it occaſioned an incident related in the *Guardian*, and alluſively mentioned by Dryden in his preface. As he came out from the repreſentation, he was accoſted thus by ſome airy ſtripling: *Had I been left alone with a young beauty, I would not have ſpent my time like your Spartan. That, Sir,* ſaid Dryden, *perhaps is true; but give me leave to tell you, that you are no hero.*

King Arthur is another opera. It was the laſt work that Dryden performed for King Charles, who did not live to ſee it exhibited; and it does not ſeem to have been ever brought upon the ſtage. In the dedication to the marquis of Halifax there is a very elegant cha-

character of Charles, and a pleaſing account of his latter life.

His laſt drama was *Love triumphant*, a tragi-comedy. In his dedication to the earl of Saliſbury he mentions *the lowneſs of fortune to which he has voluntarily reduced himſelf, and of which he has no reaſon to be aſhamed.*

This play appeared in 1694. It is ſaid to have been unſucceſsful. The cataſtrophe, proceeding merely from a change of mind, is confeſſed by the author to be defective. Thus he began and ended his dramatick labours with ill ſucceſs.

From ſuch a number of theatrical pieces it will be ſuppoſed, by moſt readers, that he muſt have improved his for-

fortune; at leaſt, that ſuch diligence with ſuch abilities muſt have ſet penury at defiance. But in Dryden's time the drama was very far from that univerſal approbation which it has now obtained. The playhouſe was abhorred by the Puritans, and avoided by thoſe who deſired the character of ſerioufneſs or decency. A grave lawyer would have debaſed his dignity, and a young trader would have impaired his credit, by appearing in thoſe manſions of diſſolute licentiouſneſs. The profits of the theatre, when ſo many claſſes of the people were deducted from the audience, were not great; and the poet had for a long time but a ſingle night. The firſt that had two nights was *Southern*, and the firſt

firſt that had three was *Rowe*. There were however, in thoſe days, arts of improving a poet's profit, which Dryden forbore to practiſe; and a play therefore ſeldom produced him more than a hundred pounds, by the accumulated gain of the third night, the dedication, and the copy.

Almoſt every piece had a dedication, written with ſuch elegance and luxuriance of praiſe, as neither haughtineſs nor avarice could be imagined able to reſiſt. But he ſeems to have made flattery too cheap. That praiſe is worth nothing of which the price is known.

To increaſe the value of his copies, he often accompanied his work with a preface of criticiſm; a kind of learning then

then little known, and therefore welcome as a novelty, and of that flexile and applicable kind, that it might be always introduced without apparent violence or affectation. By theſe diſſertations the publick judgement muſt have been much improved; and Swift, who converſed with Dryden, relates that he regretted the ſucceſs of his own inſtructions, and found his readers made ſuddenly too ſkilful to be eaſily ſatisfied.

His prologues had ſuch reputation, that for ſome time a play was conſidered as leſs likely to be well received, if ſome of his verſes did not introduce it. The price of a prologue was two guineas, till being aſked to write one for Mr. Southerne, he demanded three;

Not, ſaid he, *young man, out of diſreſpect to you, but the players have had my goods too cheap.*

Though he declares, that in his own opinion his genius was not dramatick, he had great confidence in his own fertility; for he is ſaid to have engaged, by contract, to furniſh four plays a year.

It is certain that in one year, 1678, he publiſhed *All for Love*, *Aſſignation*, two parts of the *Conqueſt of Granada*, *Sir Martin Marall*, and the *State of Innocence*, ſix complete plays; with a celerity of performance, which, though all Langbaine's charges of plagiariſm ſhould be allowed, ſhews ſuch facility of compoſition, ſuch readineſs of language, and ſuch copiouſneſs of ſentiment,

ment, as, ſince the time of Lopez de Vega, perhaps no other author has poſſeſſed.

He did not enjoy his reputation, however great, nor his profits, however ſmall, without moleſtation. He had criticks to endure, and rivals to oppoſe. The two moſt diſtinguiſhed wits of the nobility, the duke of Buckingham and earl of Rocheſter, declared themſelves his enemies.

Buckingham characteriſed him in 1671, by the name of *Bays* in the *Rehearſal*; a farce which he is ſaid to have written with the aſſiſtance of Butler the author of *Hudibras*, Martin Clifford of the Charterhouſe, and Dr. Sprat, the friend of Cowley, then his chap-

lain. Dryden and his friends laughed at the length of time and the number of hands employed upon this performance; in which, though by ſome artifice of action it yet keeps poſſeſſion of the ſtage, it is not poſſible now to find any thing that might not have been written without ſo long delay, or a confederacy ſo numerous.

To adjuſt the minute events of literary hiſtory is tedious and troubleſome; it requires indeed no great force of underſtanding, but often depends upon enquiries which there is no opportunity of making, or is to be fetched from books and pamphlets not always at hand.

The *Rehearſal* was played in 1671, and yet is repreſented as ridiculing paſ-

ſages

ſages in the *Conqueſt of Granada* and *Aſſignation*, which were not publiſhed till 1678, in *Marriage Alamode* publiſhed in 1673, and in *Tyrannick Love* of 1677. Theſe contradictions ſhew how raſhly ſatire is applied.

It is ſaid that this farce was originally intended againſt Davenant, who in the firſt draught was characteriſed by the name of *Bilboa*. Davenant had been a ſoldier and an adventurer.

There is one paſſage in the *Rehearſal* ſtill remaining, which ſeems to have related originally to Davenant. *Bays* hurts his noſe, and comes in with brown paper applied to the bruiſe: how this affected Dryden does not appear. Davenant's noſe had ſuffered ſuch diminution by

miſhaps among the women, that a patch upon that part evidently denoted him.

It is ſaid likewiſe that Sir Robert Howard was once meant. The deſign was probably to ridicule the reigning poet, whoever he might be.

Much of the perſonal ſatire, to which it might owe its firſt reception, is now loſt, or obſcured. *Bays* probably imitated the dreſs, and mimicked the manner, of Dryden; the cant words which are ſo often in his mouth may be ſuppoſed to have been Dryden's habitual phraſes, or cuſtomary exclamations. *Bays*, when he is to write, is blooded and purged: this, as Lamotte relates himſelf to have heard, was the real practice of the poet.

There

There were other ſtrokes in the *Rehearſal* by which malice was gratified: the debate between Love and Honour, which keeps prince *Volſcius* in a ſingle boot, is ſaid to have alluded to the miſconduct of the duke of Ormond, who loſt Dublin to the rebels while he was toying with a miſtreſs.

The earl of Rocheſter, to ſuppreſs the reputation of Dryden, took Settle into his protection, and endeavoured to perſuade the publick that its approbation had been to that time miſplaced. Settle was a while in high reputation: his *Empreſs of Morocco*, having firſt delighted the town, was carried in triumph to Whitehall, and played by the ladies of the court. Now was the poetical

meteor at the higheſt, the next moment began its fall. Rocheſter withdrew his patronage; ſeeming reſolved, ſays one of his biographers, *to have a judgement contrary to that of the town.* Perhaps being unable to endure any reputation beyond a certain height, even when he had himſelf contributed to raiſe it.

Neither criticks nor rivals did Dryden much miſchief, unleſs they gained from his own temper the power of vexing him, which his frequent burſts of reſentment give reaſon to ſuſpect. He is always angry at ſome paſt or afraid of ſome future cenſure; but he leſſens the ſmart of his wounds by the balm of his own approbation, and endeavours to

repel

repel the ſhafts of criticiſm by oppoſing a ſhield of adamantine confidence.

The perpetual accuſation produced againſt him was that of plagiariſm, againſt which he never attempted any vigorous defence; for, though he was perhaps ſometimes injuriouſly cenſured, he would by denying part of the charge have confeſſed the reſt; and as his adverſaries had the proof in their own hands, he, who knew that wit had little power againſt facts, wiſely left in that perplexity which generality produces a queſtion which it was his intereſt to ſuppreſs, and which, unleſs provoked by vindication, few were likely to examine.

Though the life of a writer, from about thirty-five to ſixty-three, may be ſuppoſed to have been ſufficiently buſied by the compoſition of eight and twenty pieces for the ſtage, Dryden found room in the ſame ſpace for many other undertakings.

But, how much ſoever he wrote, he was at leaſt once ſuſpected of writing more; for in 1679 a paper of verſes, called *an Eſſay on Satire*, was ſhewn about in manuſcript, by which the earl of Rocheſter, the dutcheſs of Portſmouth, and others, were ſo much provoked, that, as was ſuppoſed, for the actors were never diſcovered, they procured Dryden, whom they ſuſpected as the author, to be waylaid and beaten.

This incident is mentioned by the duke of Buckinghamſhire, the true writer, in his Art of Poetry; where he ſays of Dryden,

Though prais'd and beaten for another's rhymes,
His own deſerves as great applauſe ſometimes.

His reputation in time was ſuch, that his name was thought neceſſary to the ſucceſs of every poetical or literary performance, and therefore he was engaged to contribute ſomething, whatever it might be, to many publications. He prefixed the Life of Polybius to the tranſlation of Sir Henry Sheers; and thoſe of Lucian and Plutarch to verſions of their works by different hands.

Of

Of the Engliſh Tacitus he tranſlated the firſt book; and, if Gordon be credited, tranſlated it from the French. Such a charge can hardly be mentioned without ſome degree of indignation; but it is not, I ſuppoſe, ſo much to be inferred that Dryden wanted the literature neceſſary to the peruſal of Tacitus, as that, conſidering himſelf as hidden in a crowd, he had no awe of the publick; and, writing merely for money, was contented to get it by the neareſt way.

In 1680, the Epiſtles of Ovid being tranſlated by the poets of the time, among which one was the work of Dryden, and another of Dryden and Lord Mulgrave, it was neceſſary to introduce them

them by a preface; and Dryden, who on ſuch occaſions was regularly ſummoned, prefixed a diſcourſe upon tranſlation, which was then ſtruggling for the liberty that it now enjoys. Why it ſhould find any difficulty in breaking the ſhackles of verbal interpretation, which muſt for ever debar it from elegance, it would be difficult to conjecture, were not the power of prejudice every day obſerved. The authority of Jonſon, Sandys, and Holiday, had fixed the judgement of the nation; and it was not eaſily believed that a better way could be found than they had taken, though Denham, Waller, and Cowley, had tried to give examples of a different practice.

In 1681, Dryden became yet more conſpicuous by uniting politicks with poetry, in the memorable ſatire called *Abſalom and Achitophel*, written againſt the faction which, by lord Shafteſbury's incitement, ſet the duke of Monmouth at its head.

Of this poem, in which perſonal ſatire was applied to the ſupport of publick principles, and in which therefore every mind was intereſted, the reception was eager, and the ſale ſo large, that my father, an old bookſeller, told me, he had not known it equalled but by *Sacheverel's* trial.

The reaſon of this general peruſal Addiſon has attempted to derive from the delight which the mind feels in the inveſti-

inveſtigation of ſecrets; and thinks that curioſity to decypher the names procured readers to the poem. There is no need to enquire why thoſe verſes were read, which, to all the attractions of wit, elegance, and harmony, added the co-operation of all the factious paſſions, and filled every mind with triumph or reſentment.

It could not be ſuppoſed that all the provocation given by Dryden would be endured without reſiſtance or reply. Both his perſon and his party were expoſed in their turns to the ſhafts of ſatire, which, though neither ſo well pointed nor perhaps ſo well aimed, undoubtedly drew blood.

One

One of theſe poems is called *Dryden's Satire on his Muſe*; aſcribed, though, as Pope ſays, falſely, to *Somers*, who was afterwards Chancellor. The poem, whoſe ſoever it was, has much virulence, and ſome ſpritelineſs. The writer tells all the ill that he can collect, both of Dryden and his friends.

The poem of *Abſalom and Achitophel* had two anſwers, now both forgotten; one called *Azaria and Huſhai*; the other, *Abſalom ſenior*. Of theſe hoſtile compoſitions, Dryden apparently imputes *Abſalom ſenior* to *Settle*, by quoting in his verſes againſt him the ſecond line. *Azaria and Huſhai* was, as *Wood* ſays, imputed to him, though it is ſomewhat unlikely that he ſhould write twice on

the

the ſame occaſion. This is a difficulty which I cannot remove, for want of a minuter knowledge of poetical tranſactions.

The ſame year he publiſhed the *Medal*, of which the ſubject is a medal ſtruck on lord Shafteſbury's eſcape from a proſecution, by the *ignoramus* of a grand jury of Londoners.

In both poems he maintains the ſame principles, and ſaw them both attacked by the ſame antagoniſt. Elkanah Settle, who had anſwered *Abſalom*, appeared with equal courage in oppoſition to the *Medal*, and publiſhed an anſwer called *The Medal reverſed*, with ſo much ſucceſs in both encounters, that he left the palm doubtful, and divided the ſuffrages of the

the nation. Such are the revolutions of fame, or such is the prevalence of fashion, that the man whose works have not yet been thought to deserve the care of collecting them; who died forgotten in an hospital; and whose latter years were spent in contriving shows for fairs, and carrying an elegy or epithalamium, of which the beginning and end were occasionally varied, but the intermediate parts were always the same, to every house where there was a funeral or a wedding; might, with truth, have had inscribed upon his stone,

Here lies the Rival and Antagonist of Dryden.

Settle was, for this rebellion, severely chastised by Dryden under the name

name of *Doeg*, in the ſecond part of *Abſalom and Achitophel*, and was perhaps for his factious audacity made the city poet, whoſe annual office was to deſcribe the glories of the Mayor's day. Of theſe bards he was the laſt, and ſeems not much to have deſerved even this degree of regard, if it was paid to his political opinions; for he afterwards wrote a panegyrick on the virtues of judge Jefferies, and what more could have been done by the meaneſt zealot for prerogative?

Of tranſlated fragments, or occaſional poems, to enumerate the titles, or ſettle the dates, would be tedious, with little uſe. It may be obſerved, that as Dryden's genius was commonly excited by ſome

perſonal regard, he rarely writes upon a general topick.

Soon after the acceſſion of king James, when the deſign of reconciling the nation to the church of Rome became apparent, and the religion of the court gave the only efficacious title to its favours, Dryden declared himſelf a convert to popery. This at any other time might have paſſed with little cenſure. Sir *Kenelm Digby* embraced popery; the two *Rainholds* reciprocally converted one another; and *Chillingworth* himſelf was a while ſo entangled in the wilds of controverſy, as to retire for quiet to an infallible church. If men of argument and ſtudy can find ſuch difficulties, or ſuch motives, as may either

either unite them to the church of Rome, or detain them in uncertainty, there can be no wonder that a man, who perhaps never enquired why he was a proteſtant, ſhould by an artful and experienced diſputant be made a papiſt, overborn by the ſudden violence of new and unexpected arguments, or deceived by a repreſentation which ſhews only the doubts on one part, and only the evidence on the other.

That converſion will always be ſuſpected that apparently concurs with intereſt. He that never finds his error till it hinders his progreſs towards wealth or honour, will not be thought to love Truth only for herſelf. Yet it may eaſily happen that information may come

at a commodious time; and as truth and intereſt are not by any fatal neceſſity at variance, that one may by accident introduce the other. When opinions are ſtruggling into popularity, the arguments by which they are oppoſed or defended become more known; and he that changes his profeſſion would perhaps have changed it before, with the like opportunities of inſtruction. This was then the ſtate of popery; every artifice was uſed to ſhew it in its faireſt form; and it muſt be owned to be a religion of external appearance ſufficiently attractive.

It is natural to hope that a comprehenſive is likewiſe an elevated ſoul, and that whoever is wiſe is alſo honeſt.

I am

BIBLIOTHECA BODLEIANA

I am willing to believe that Dryden, having employed his mind, active as it was, upon different ſtudies, and filled it, capacious as it was, with other materials, came unprovided to the controverſy, and wanted rather ſkill to diſcover the right than virtue to maintain it. But enquiries into the heart are not for man; we muſt now leave him to his Judge.

The prieſts, having ſtrengthened their cauſe by ſo powerful an adherent, were not long before they brought him into action. They engaged him to defend the controverſial papers found in the ſtrong-box of Charles the Second, and, what yet was harder, to defend them againſt Stillingfleet.

With hopes of promoting popery, he was employed to tranſlate Maimbourg's Hiſtory of the League; which he publiſhed, with a large Introduction. His name is likewiſe prefixed to the Engliſh Life of Francis Xavier; but I know not that he ever owned himſelf the tranſlator. Perhaps the uſe of his name was a pious fraud, which however ſeems not to have had much effect; for neither of the books, I believe, was ever popular.

The verſion of Xavier's Life is commended by Brown, in a pamphlet not written to flatter; and the occaſion of it is ſaid to have been, that the Queen, when ſhe ſolicited a ſon, made vows to him as her tutelary ſaint.

He

He was ſuppoſed to have undertaken to tranſlate *Varillas's Hiſtory of Hereſies*; and when *Burnet* publiſhed Remarks upon it, to have written an *Anſwer*; upon which Burnet makes the following obſervation:

"I have been informed from Eng-
"land, that a gentleman, who is famous
"both for poetry and ſeveral other
"things, had ſpent three months in
"tranſlating M. Varillas's Hiſtory; but
"that, as ſoon as my Reflections ap-
"peared, he diſcontinued his labour,
"finding the credit of his author was
"gone. Now, if he thinks it is reco-
"vered by his Anſwer, he will perhaps
"go on with his tranſlation; and this
"may be, for aught I know, as good

" an entertainment for him as the con-
" verſation thar he had ſet on between
" the Hinds and Panthers, and all the
" reſt of animals; for whom M. Varil-
" las may ſerve well enough as an au-
" thor: and this hiſtory and that poem
" are ſuch extraordinary things of their
" kind, that it will be but ſuitable to
" ſee the author of the worſt poem be-
" come likewiſe the tranſlator of the
" worſt hiſtory that the age has pro-
" duced. If his grace and his wit im-
" prove both proportionably, he will
" hardly find that he has gained much
" by the change he has made, from
" having no religion to chuſe one of
" the worſt. It is true, he had ſome-
" what to ſink from in matter of wit;

" but

" but as for his morals, it is ſcarce poſ-
" ſible for him to grow a worſe man
" than he was. He has lately wreaked
" his malice on me for ſpoiling his three
" months labour; but in it he has done
" me all the honour that any man can
" receive from him, which is to be
" railed at by him. If I had ill-nature
" enough to prompt me to wiſh a very
" bad wiſh for him, it ſhould be, that
" he would go on and finiſh his tranſla-
" tion. By that it will appear, whether
" the Engliſh nation, which is the moſt
" competent judge in this matter, has,
" upon the ſeeing our debate, pro-
" nounced in M. Varillas's favour, or in
" mine. It is true, Mr. D. will ſuffer
" a little by it; but at leaſt it will ſerve

" to

"to keep him in from other extravagan-
"cies; and if he gains little honour by
"this work, yet he cannot loſe ſo much
"by it as he has done by his laſt em-
"ployment."

Having probably felt his own inferiority in Theological controverſy, he was deſirous of trying whether, by bringing poetry to aid his arguments, he might become a more efficacious defender of his new profeſſion. To reaſon in verſe was, indeed, one of his powers; but ſubtilty and harmony united are ſtill feeble, when oppoſed to truth.

Actuated therefore by zeal for Rome, or hope of fame, he publiſhed the *Hind and Panther*, a poem in which the church of

Rome,

Rome, figured by the *milk-white Hind*, defends her tenets againſt the church of England, repreſented by the *Panther*, a beaſt beautiful, but ſpotted.

A fable which exhibits two beaſts talking Theology, appears at once full of abſurdity; and it was accordingly ridiculed in the *City Mouſe* and *Country Mouſe*, a parody, written by Montague, afterwards earl of Halifax, and Prior, who then gave the firſt ſpecimen of his abilities.

The converſion of ſuch a man, at ſuch a time, was not likely to paſs uncenſured. Three dialogues were publiſhed by the facetious *Thomas Brown*, of which the two firſt were called *Reaſons of Mr. Bays's changing his religion*; and the

the third *The Reaſons of Mr. Hains the player's converſion and re-converſion.* The firſt was printed in 1688, the ſecond not till 1690, the third in 1691. The clamour ſeems to have been long continued, and the ſubject to have ſtrongly fixed the publick attention.

In the two firſt dialogues *Bays* is brought into the company of *Crites* and *Eugenius*, with whom he had formerly debated on dramatick poetry. The two talkers in the third are Mr. *Bays* and Mr. *Hains*.

Brown was a man not deficient in literature, nor deſtitute of fancy; but he ſeems to have thought it the pinnacle of excellence to be a *merry fellow*, and therefore laid out his powers upon ſmall

ſmall jeſts or groſs buffoonery, ſo that his performances have little intrinſick value, and were read only while they were recommended by the novelty of the event that occaſioned them.

Theſe dialogues are like his other works: what ſenſe or knowledge they contain, is diſgraced by the garb in which it is exhibited. One great ſource of pleaſure is to call Dryden *little Bays*. *Ajax*, who happens to be mentioned, is *he that wore as many cowhides upon his ſhield as would have furniſhed half the king's army with ſhoe-leather*.

Being aſked whether he has ſeen the *Hind and Panther*, Crites anſwers: *Seen it*, Mr. Bays, *why I can ſtir no where but it perſues me; it haunts me worſe than a pewter-*

a pewter-buttoned ſerjeant does a decayed cit. Sometimes I meet it in a band-box, when my laundreſs brings home my linen; ſometimes, whether I will or no, it lights my pipe at a coffee-houſe; ſometimes it ſurpriſes me in a trunkmaker's ſhop; and ſometimes it refreſhes my memory for me on the backſide of a Chancery-lane parcel. For your comfort too, Mr. Bays, I have not only ſeen it, as you may perceive, but have read it too, and can quote it as freely upon occaſion as a frugal tradeſman can quote that noble treatiſe the Worth of a Penny *to his extravagant 'prentice, that revels in ſtewed apples, and penny cuſtards.*

The whole animation of theſe compoſitions ariſes from a profuſion of ludicrous and affected compariſons. *To ſecure*

ſecure one's chaſtity, ſays Bays, *little more is neceſſary than to leave off a correſpondence with the other ſex, which, to a wiſe man, is no greater a puniſhment than it would be to a fanatick parſon to be forbid* ſeeing *the* Cheats *and the* Committee; *or for my Lord Mayor and Aldermen to be interdicted the ſight of the* London Cuckold.—This is the general ſtrain, and therefore I ſhall be eaſily excuſed the labour of more tranſcription.

Brown does not wholly forget paſt tranſactions: *You began*, ſays Crites to Bays, *with a very indifferent religion, and have not mended the matter in your laſt choice. It was but reaſon that your Muſe, which appeared firſt in a Tyrant's quarrel, ſhould*

ſhould employ her laſt efforts to juſtify the uſurpations of the Hind.

Next year the nation was ſummoned to celebrate the birth of the Prince. Now was the time for Dryden to rouſe his imagination, and ſtrain his voice. Happy days were at hand, and he was willing to enjoy and diffuſe the anticipated bleſſings. He publiſhed a poem, filled with predictions of greatneſs and proſperity; predictions of which it is not neceſſary to tell how they have been verified.

A few months paſſed after theſe joyful notes, and every bloſſom of popiſh hope was blaſted for ever by the Revolution. A papiſt now could be no longer Laureat. The revenue, which he

had enjoyed with ſo much pride and praiſe, was transferred to Shadwel, an old enemy, whom he had formerly ſtigmatiſed by the name of *Og*. Dryden could not decently complain that he was depoſed; but ſeemed very angry that Shadwel ſucceeded him, and has therefore celebrated the intruder's inauguration in a poem exquiſitely ſatirical, called *Mac Flecno*; of which the *Dunciad*, as Pope himſelf declares, is an imitation, though more extended in its plan, and more diverſified in its incidents.

It is related by Prior, that Lord Dorſet, when, as chamberlain, he was conſtrained to eject Dryden from his office, gave him from his own purſe an allow-

ance equal to the ſalary. This is no romantick or incredible act of generoſity; an hundred a year is often enough given to claims leſs cogent, by men leſs famed for liberality. Yet Dryden always repreſented himſelf as ſuffering under a publick infliction; and once particularly demands reſpect for the patience with which he endured the loſs of his little fortune. His patron might, indeed, enjoin him to ſuppreſs his bounty; but if he ſuffered nothing, he ſhould not have complained.

During the ſhort reign of king James he had written nothing for the ſtage, being, in his own opinion, more profitably employed in controverſy and flattery. Of praiſe he might perhaps

have

have been leſs laviſh without inconvenience, for James was never ſaid to have much regard for poetry: he was to be flattered only by adopting his religion.

Times were now changed: Dryden was no longer the court-poet, and was to look back for ſupport to his former trade; and having waited about two years, either conſidering himſelf as diſcountenanced by the publick, or perhaps expecting a ſecond revolution, he produced *Don Sebaſtian*, in 1690; and in the next four years four dramas more.

In 1693 appeared a new verſion of Juvenal and Perſius. Of Juvenal he tranſlated the firſt, third, ſixth, tenth,

and fixteenth ſatires; and of Perſius the whole work. On this occaſion he introduced his two ſons to the publick, as nurſelings of the Muſes. The fourteenth of Juvenal was the work of John, and the ſeventh of Charles Dryden. He prefixed a very ample preface in the form of a dedication to lord Dorſet; and there gives an account of the deſign which he had once formed to write an epick poem on the actions either of Arthur or the Black Prince. He conſidered the epick as neceſſarily including ſome kind of ſupernatural agency, and had imaged a new kind of conteſt between the guardian angels of kingdoms, of whom he conceived that each might be repreſented zealous for his

his charge, without any intended oppoſition to the purpoſes of the Supreme Being, of which all created minds muſt in part be ignorant.

This is the moſt reaſonable ſcheme of celeſtial interpoſition that ever was formed. The ſurprizes and terrors of enchantments, which have ſucceeded to the intrigues and oppoſitions of pagan deities, afford very ſtriking ſcenes, and open a vaſt extent to the imagination; but, as Boileau obſerves, and Boileau will be ſeldom found miſtaken, with this incurable defect, that in a conteſt between heaven and hell we know at the beginning which is to prevail; for this reaſon we follow Rinaldo to the enchanted wood with more curioſity than terror.

In the ſcheme of Dryden there is one great difficulty, which yet he would perhaps have had addreſs enough to ſurmount. In a war juſtice can be but on one ſide; and to entitle the hero to the protection of angels, he muſt fight in the defence of indubitable right. Yet ſome of the celeſtial beings, thus oppoſed to each other, muſt have been repreſented as defending guilt.

That this poem was never written, is reaſonably to be lamented. It would doubtleſs have improved our numbers and enlarged our language, and might perhaps have contributed by pleaſing inſtruction to rectify our opinions, and purify our manners.

What he required as the indiſpenſable condition of ſuch an undertaking, a publick ſtipend, was not likely in thoſe times to be obtained. Riches were not become familiar to us, and the nation had not yet learned to be liberal.

This plan he charged Blackmore with ſtealing; only, ſays he, *the guardian angels of kingdoms were machines too ponderous for him to manage.*

In 1694, he began the moſt laborious and difficult of all his works, the tranſlation of Virgil; from which he borrowed two months, that he might turn Freſnoy's Art of Painting into Engliſh proſe. The preface, which he boaſts to have written in twelve mornings, ex-

hibits a parallel of poetry and painting, with a miſcellaneous collection of critical remarks, ſuch as coſt a mind ſtored like his no labour to produce them.

In 1697, he publiſhed his verſion of the works of Virgil; and, that no opportunity of profit might be loſt, dedicated the Paſtorals to the lord Clifford, the Georgics to the earl of Chesterfield, and the Eneid to the earl of Mulgrave. This œconomy of flattery, at once laviſh and diſcreet, did not paſs without obſervation.

This tranſlation was cenſured by Milbourne, a clergyman, ſtiled by Pope *the faireſt of critics*, becauſe he exhibited his own verſion to be compared with that which he condemned.

His

His laſt work was his Fables, publiſhed in 1699, in conſequence, as is ſuppoſed, of a contract now in the hands of Mr. Tonſon; by which he obliged himſelf, in conſideration of three hundred pounds, to finiſh for the preſs ten thouſand verſes.

In this volume is compriſed the well-known ode on St. Cecilia's day, which, as appeared by a letter communicated to Dr. Birch, he ſpent a fortnight in compoſing and correcting. But what is this to the patience and diligence of Boileau, whoſe *Equivoque*, a poem of only three hundred forty-ſix lines, took from his life eleven months to write it, and three years to reviſe it!

Part of this book of Fables is the firſt Iliad in Engliſh, intended as a ſpecimen of a verſion of the whole. Conſidering into what hands Homer was to fall, the reader cannot but rejoice that this project went no further.

The time was now at hand which was to put an end to all his ſchemes and labours. On the firſt of May 1701, having been ſome time, as he tells us, a cripple in his limbs, he died in Gerrard-ſtreet of a mortification in his leg.

There is extant a wild ſtory relating to ſome vexatious events that happened at his funeral, which, at the end of Congreve's Life, by a writer of I know not what credit, are thus related, as I find

find the account transferred to a biographical dictionary:

"Mr. Dryden dying on the Wednesday morning, Dr. Thomas Sprat, then bishop of Rochester and dean of Westminster, sent the next day to the lady Elizabeth Howard, Mr. Dryden's widow, that he would make a present of the ground, which was forty pounds, with all the other Abbey-fees. The lord Hallifax likewise sent to the lady Elizabeth, and Mr. Charles Dryden her son, that, if they would give him leave to bury Mr. Dryden, he would inter him with a gentleman's private funeral, and afterwards bestow five hundred pounds on a monument in the Abbey; which, as they had no

"reason

" reaſon to refuſe, they accepted. On " the Saturday following the company " came; the corpſe was put into a vel- " vet hearſe, and eighteen mourning " coaches, filled with company, at- " tended. When they were juſt ready " to move, the lord Jefferies, ſon of the " lord chancellor Jefferies, with ſome of " his rakiſh companions coming by, " aſked whoſe funeral it was: and being " told Mr. Dryden's, he ſaid, " What " ſhall Dryden, the greateſt honour and " ornament of the nation, be buried " after this private manner! No, gen- " tlemen, let all that loved Mr. Dryden, " and honour his memory, alight and " join with me in gaining my lady's " conſent to let me have the honour

" of

" of his interment, which ſhall be after
" another manner than this; and I will
" beſtow a thouſand pounds on a monu-
" ment in the Abbey for him." The
" gentlemen in the coaches, not know-
" ing of the biſhop of Rocheſter's fa-
" vour, nor of the lord Hallifax's ge-
" nerous deſign (they both having, out
" of reſpect to the family, enjoined the
" lady Elizabeth and her ſon to keep
" their favour concealed to the world,
" and let it paſs for their own expence),
" readily came out of the coaches, and
" attended lord Jefferies up to the lady's
" bedſide, who was then ſick: he re-
" peated the purport of what he had
" before ſaid; but ſhe abſolutely re-
" fuſing, he fell on his knees, vowing
" never

"never to riſe till his requeſt was "granted. The reſt of the company "by his deſire kneeled alſo; and the "lady, being under a ſudden ſurprize, "fainted away. As ſoon as ſhe reco-"vered her ſpeech, ſhe cried, *No, no.* "Enough, gentlemen, replied he; my "lady is very good, ſhe ſays, *Go, go.*" "She repeated her former words with "all her ſtrength, but in vain; for her "feeble voice was loſt in their accla-"mations of joy; and the lord Jefferies "ordered the hearſemen to carry the "corps to Mr. Ruſſel's, an undertaker's "in Cheapſide, and leave it there till he "ſhould ſend orders for the embalment, "which, he added, ſhould be after the "royal manner. His directions were

"obeyed,

"obeyed, the company diſperſed, and "lady Elizabeth and her ſon remained "inconſolable. The next day Mr. "Charles Dryden waited on the lord "Hallifax and the biſhop, to excuſe his "mother and himſelf, by relating the "real truth. But neither his lordſhip "nor the biſhop would admit of any "plea; eſpecially the latter, who had "the Abbey lighted, the ground open-"ed, the choir attending, an anthem "ready ſet, and himſelf waiting for ſome "time without any corpſe to bury. The "undertaker, after three days expec-"tance of orders for embalment with-"out receiving any, waited on the lord "Jefferies; who, pretending ignorance "of the matter, turned it off with an

"ill-

"ill-natured jeſt, ſaying, That thoſe "who obſerved the orders of a drunken "frolick deſerved no better; that he "remembered nothing at all of it; and "that he might do what he pleaſed with "the corpſe. Upon this, the under- "taker waited upon the lady Elizabeth "and her ſon, and threatned to bring "the corpſe home, and ſet it before the "door. They deſired a day's reſpite, "which was granted. Mr. Charles Dry- "den wrote a handſome letter to the "lord Jefferies, who returned it with "this cool anſwer, "That he knew "nothing of the matter, and would be "troubled no more about it." He then "addreſſed the lord Hallifax and the "biſhop of Rocheſter, who abſolutely

"re-

" refuſed to do any thing in it. In this
" diſtreſs Dr. Garth ſent for the corpſe
" to the College of Phyſicians, and pro-
" poſed a funeral by ſubſcription, to
" which himſelf ſet a moſt noble exam-
" ple. At laſt a day, about three weeks
" after Mr. Dryden's deceaſe, was ap-
" pointed for the interment: Dr. Garth
" pronounced a fine Latin oration, at
" the College, over the corpſe; which
" was attended to the Abbey by a nu-
" merous train of coaches. When the
" funeral was over, Mr. Charles Dryden
" ſent a challenge to the lord Jefferies,
" who refuſing to anſwer it, he ſent ſe-
" veral others, and went often himſelf;
" but could neither get a letter deli-
" vered, nor admittance to ſpeak to

" him: which ſo incenſed him, that he " reſolved, ſince his lordſhip refuſed to " anſwer him like a gentleman, that he " would watch an opportunity to meet, " and fight off-hand, though with all " the rules of honour; which his lord- " ſhip hearing, left the town: and Mr. " Charles Dryden could never have the " ſatisfaction of meeting him, though " he ſought it till his death with the " utmoſt application."

This ſtory I once intended to omit, as it appears with no great evidence; but having been ſince informed that there is in the regiſter of the College of Phyſicians an order relating to Dryden's funeral, I can doubt its truth no longer.

The

The gradual change of manners, though imperceptible in the proceſs, appears great when different times, and thoſe not very diſtant, are compared. If at this time a young drunken Lord ſhould interrupt the pompous regularity of a magnificent funeral, what would be the event, but that he would be juſtled out of the way, and compelled to be quiet? If he ſhould thruſt himſelf into a houſe, he would be ſent roughly away; and what is yet more to the honour of the preſent time, I believe, that thoſe who had ſubſcribed to the funeral of a man like Dryden, would not, for ſuch an accident, have withdrawn their contributions.

He was buried among the poets in Weſtminſter Abbey, where, though the duke of Newcaſtle had, in a general dedication prefixed by Congreve to his dramatick works, accepted thanks for his intention of erecting him a monument, he lay long without diſtinction, till the duke of Buckinghamſhire gave him a tablet, inſcribed only with the name of DRYDEN.

He married the lady Elizabeth Howard, daughter of the earl of Berkſhire, with circumſtances, according to the ſatire imputed to lord Somers, not very honourable to either party: by her he had three ſons, Charles, John, and Henry. Charles was uſher of the palace to pope Clement the XIth, and viſiting Eng-

England in 1704, was drowned in an attempt to ſwim croſs the Thames at Windſor.

John was author of a comedy called *The Huſband his own Cuckold.* He is ſaid to have died at Rome. Henry entered into ſome religious order. It is ſome proof of Dryden's ſincerity in his ſecond religion, that he taught it to his ſons. A man conſcious of hypocritical profeſſion in himſelf, is not likely to convert others; and as his ſons were qualified in 1693 to appear among the tranſlators of Juvenal, they muſt have been taught ſome religion before their father's change.

Of the perſon of Dryden I know not any account; of his mind, the portrait which has been left by Congreve, who knew him with great familiarity, is ſuch as adds our love of his manners to our admiration of his genius. "He was," we are told, "of a nature exceedingly "humane and compaſſionate, ready to "forgive injuries, and capable of a ſin-"cere reconciliation with thoſe that had "offended him. His friendſhip, where "he profeſſed it, went beyond his pro-"feſſions. He was of a very eaſy, of "very pleaſing acceſs; but ſomewhat "ſlow, and, as it were, diffident in his "advances to others: he had that in "his nature which abhorred intruſion "into any ſociety whatever. He was "there-

" therefore leſs known, and conſequent-
" ly his character became more liable
" to miſapprehenſions and miſrepreſen-
" tations: he was very modeſt, and very
" eaſily to be diſcountenanced in his
" approaches to his equals or ſuperiors.
" As his reading had been very exten-
" ſive, ſo was he very happy in a me-
" mory tenacious of every thing that
" he had read. He was not more poſ-
" ſeſſed of knowledge than he was com-
" municative of it; but then his com-
" munication was by no means pedan-
" tick, or impoſed upon the converſa-
" tion, but juſt ſuch, and went ſo far
" as, by the natural turn of the conver-
" ſation in which he was engaged, it

" was neceſſarily promoted or required.
" He was extreme ready, and gentle
" in his correction of the errors of any
" writer who thought fit to conſult him,
" and full as ready and patient to admit
" of the reprehenſions of others, in re-
" ſpect of his own overſights or miſ-
" takes."

To this account of Congreve nothing can be objected but the fondneſs of friendſhip; and to have excited that fondneſs in ſuch a mind is no ſmall degree of praiſe. The diſpoſition of Dryden, however, is ſhewn in this character rather as it exhibited itſelf in curſory converſation, than as it operated on the more important parts of life. His placability

cability and his friendſhip indeed were ſolid virtues; but courteſy and good-humour are often found with little real worth. Since Congreve, who knew him well, has told us no more, the reſt muſt be collected as it can from other teſtimonies, and particularly from thoſe notices which Dryden has very liberally given us of himſelf.

The modeſty which made him ſo ſlow to advance, and ſo eaſy to be repulſed, was certainly no ſuſpicion of deficient merit, or unconſciouſneſs of his own value: he appears to have known, in its whole extent, the dignity of his character, and to have ſet a very high value on his own powers and performances. He probably did not offer his converſation,

tion, becauſe he expected it to be ſolicited; and he retired from a cold reception, not ſubmiſſive but indignant, with ſuch reverence of his own greatneſs as made him unwilling to expoſe it to neglect or violation.

His modeſty was by no means inconſiſtent with oſtentatiouſneſs: he is diligent enough to remind the world of his merit, and expreſſes with very little ſcruple his high opinion of his own powers; but his ſelf-commendations are read without ſcorn or indignation; we allow his claims, and love his frankneſs.

Tradition, however, has not allowed that his confidence in himſelf exempted him from jealouſy of others. He is accuſed of envy and inſidiouſneſs; and

is

is particularly charged with inciting Creech to tranſlate Horace, that he might loſe the reputation which Lucretius had given him.

Of this charge we immediately diſcover that it is merely conjectural; the purpoſe was ſuch as no man would confeſs; and a crime that admits no proof, why ſhould we believe?

He has been deſcribed as magiſterially preſiding over the younger writers, and aſſuming the diſtribution of poetical fame; but he who excels has a right to teach, and he whoſe judgement is inconteſtable may, without uſurpation, examine and decide.

Congreve repreſents him as ready to adviſe and inſtruct; but there is reaſon

to believe that his communication was rather uſeful than entertaining. He declares of himſelf that he was ſaturnine, and not one of thoſe whoſe ſpritely ſayings diverted company; and one of his cenſurers makes him ſay,

Nor wine nor love could ever ſee me gay;
To writing bred, I knew not what to ſay.

There are men whoſe powers operate only at leiſure and in retirement, and whoſe intellectual vigour deſerts them in converſation; whom merriment confuſes, and objection diſconcerts; whoſe baſhfulneſs reſtrains their exertion, and ſuffers them not to ſpeak till the time of ſpeaking is paſt; or whoſe attention

to their own character makes them unwilling to utter at hazard what has not been conſidered, and cannot be recalled.

Of Dryden's ſluggiſhneſs in converſation it is vain to ſearch or to gueſs the cauſe. He certainly wanted neither ſentiments nor language; his intellectual treaſures were great, though they were locked up from his own uſe. *His thoughts*, when he wrote, *flowed in upon him ſo faſt, that his only care was which to chuſe, and which to reject.* Such rapidity of compoſition naturally promiſes a flow of talk, yet we muſt be content to believe what an enemy ſays of him, when he likewiſe ſays it of himſelf. But whatever was his character as a com-

companion, it appears that he lived in familiarity with the higheſt perſons of his time. It is related by Carte of the duke of Ormond, that he uſed often to paſs a night with Dryden, and thoſe with whom Dryden conſorted: who they were, Carte has not told; but certainly the convivial table at which Ormond ſat was not ſurrounded with a plebeian ſociety. He was indeed reproached with boaſting of his familiarity with the great; and Horace will ſupport him in the opinion, that to pleaſe ſuperiours is not the loweſt kind of merit.

The merit of pleaſing muſt, however, be eſtimated by the means. Favour is not always gained by good actions or laudable

laudable qualities. Careſſes and preferments are often beſtowed on the auxiliaries of vice, the procurers of pleaſure, or the flatterers of vanity. Dryden has never been charged with any perſonal agency unworthy of a good character: he abetted vice and vanity only with his pen. One of his enemies has accuſed him of lewdneſs in his converſation; but if accuſation without proof be credited, who ſhall be innocent?

His works afford too many examples of diſſolute licentiouſneſs, and abject adulation; but they were probably, like his merriment, artificial and conſtrained; the effects of ſtudy and meditation, and his trade rather than his pleaſure.

Of

Of the mind that can trade in corruption, and can deliberately pollute itſelf with ideal wickedneſs for the ſake of ſpreading the contagion in ſociety, I wiſh not to conceal or excuſe the depravity.—Such degradation of the dignity of genius, ſuch abuſe of ſuperlative abilities, cannot be contemplated but with grief and indignation. What conſolation can be had, Dryden has afforded, by living to repent, and to teſtify his repentance.

Of dramatick immorality he did not want examples among his predeceſſors, or companions among his contemporaries; but in the meanneſs and ſervility of hyperbolical adulation, I know not whether, ſince the days in which the

the Roman emperors were deified, he has been ever equalled, except by Afra Behn in an addreſs to Eleanor Gwyn. When once he has undertaken the taſk of praiſe, he no longer retains ſhame in himſelf, nor ſuppoſes it in his patron. As many odoriferous bodies are obſerved to diffuſe perfumes from year to year, without ſenſible diminution of bulk or weight, he appears never to have impoveriſhed his mint of flattery by his expences, however laviſh. He had all the forms of excellence, intellectual and moral, combined in his mind, with endleſs variation; and when he had ſcattered on the hero of the day the golden ſhower of wit and virtue, he had ready for him, whom he

wiſhed to court on the morrow, new wit and virtue with another ſtamp. Of this kind of meanneſs he never ſeems to decline the practice, or lament the neceſſity: he conſiders the great as entitled to encomiaſtick homage, and brings praiſe rather as a tribute than a gift, more delighted with the fertility of his invention than mortified by the proſtitution of his judgement. It is indeed not certain, that on theſe occaſions his judgement much rebelled againſt his intereſt. There are minds which eaſily ſink into ſubmiſſion, that look on grandeur with undiſtinguiſhing reverence, and diſcover no defect where there is elevation of rank and affluence of riches.

7

With

With his praiſes of others and of himſelf is always intermingled a ſtrain of diſcontent and lamentation, a ſullen growl of reſentment, or a querulous murmur of diſtreſs. His works are undervalued, his merit is unrewarded, and *he has few thanks to pay his ſtars that he was born among Engliſhmen.* To his criticks he is ſometimes contemptuous, ſometimes reſentful, and ſometimes ſubmiſſive. The writer who thinks his works formed for duration, miſtakes his intereſt when he mentions his enemies. He degrades his own dignity by ſhewing that he was affected by their cenſures, and gives laſting importance to names, which, left to themſelves, would vaniſh from remembrance. From

this principle Dryden did not oft depart; his complaints are, for the greater part, general; he ſeldom pollutes his page with an adverſe name. He condeſcended indeed to a controverſy with Settle, in which he perhaps may be conſidered rather as aſſaulting than repelling; and ſince Settle has ſunk into oblivion, his libel remains injurious only to himſelf.

Among anſwers to criticks, no poetical attacks, or altercations, are to be included: they are, like other poems, effuſions of genius, produced as much to obtain praiſe as to obviate cenſure. Theſe Dryden practiſed, and in theſe he excelled.

Of

Of Collier, Blackmore, and Milbourne, he has made mention in the preface to his Fables. To the cenſure of Collier, whoſe remarks may be rather termed admonitions than criticiſms, he makes little reply; being, at the age of ſixty-eight, attentive to better things than the claps of a playhouſe. He complains of Collier's rudeneſs, and the *horſe-play of his raillery*; and aſſerts that *in many places he has perverted by his gloſſes the meaning* of what he cenſures; but in other things he confeſſes that he is juſtly taxed; and ſays, with great calmneſs and candour, *I have pleaded guilty to all thoughts or expreſſions of mine that can be truly accuſed of obſcenity, immorality, or profaneneſs, and retract them.*

If he be my enemy, let him triumph; if he be my friend, he will be glad of my repentance. Yet, as our beſt diſpoſitions are imperfect, he left ſtanding in the ſame book a reflection on Collier of great aſperity, and indeed of more aſperity than wit.

Blackmore he repreſents as made his enemy by the poem of *Abſalom and Achitophel*, which *he thinks a little hard upon his fanatick patrons*; and charges him with borrowing the plan of his *Arthur* from the preface to Juvenal, *though he had*, ſays he, *the baſeneſs not to acknowledge his benefactor, but inſtead of it to traduce me in a libel.*

The libel in which Blackmore traduced him was a *Satire upon Wit*; in which,

which, having lamented the exuberance of falſe wit and the deficiency of true, he propoſes that all wit ſhould be re-coined before it is current, and appoints maſters of aſſay who ſhall reject all that is light or debaſed.

'Tis true, that when the coarſe and worthleſs droſs
Is purg'd away, there will be mighty loſs;
Ev'n Congreve, Southern, manly Wycherly,
When thus refin'd, will grievous ſuff'rers be;
Into the melting-pot when Dryden comes,
What horrid ſtench will riſe, what noiſome fumes!

How will he ſhrink, when all his lewd
allay,
And wicked mixture, ſhall be purg'd
away?

Thus ſtands the paſſage in the laſt edition; but in the original there was an abatement of the cenſure, beginning thus:

But what remains will be ſo pure, 'twill
bear
Th' examination of the moſt ſevere.

Blackmore finding the cenſure reſented, and the civility diſregarded, ungeneroufly omitted the ſofter part. Such variations diſcover a writer who conſults his paſſions more than his virtue; and it may be reaſonably ſuppoſed that Dryden imputes his enmity to its true cauſe.

Of

Of Milbourne he wrote only in general terms, ſuch as are always ready at the call of anger, whether juſt or not: a ſhort extract will be ſufficient. *He pretends a quarrel to me, that I have fallen foul upon prieſthood; if I have, I am only to aſk pardon of good prieſts, and am afraid his ſhare of the reparation will come to little. Let him be ſatisfied that he ſhall never be able to force himſelf upon me for an adverſary; I contemn him too much to enter into competition with him.*

As for the reſt of thoſe who have written againſt me, they are ſuch ſcoundrels that they deſerve not the leaſt notice to be taken of them. Blackmore and Milbourne are only diſtinguiſhed from the crowd by being remembered to their infamy.

Dryden

Dryden indeed diſcovered, in many of his writings, an affected and abſurd malignity to prieſts and prieſthood, which naturally raiſed him many enemies, and which was ſometimes as unſeaſonably reſented as it was exerted. Trapp is angry that he calls the ſacrificer in the *Georgicks* the *holy butcher*: the tranſlation is indeed ridiculous; but Trapp's anger ariſes from his zeal, not for the author, but the prieſt; as if any reproach of the follies of paganiſm could be extended to the preachers of truth.

Dryden's diſlike of the prieſthood is imputed by Langbaine, and I think by Brown, to a repulſe which he ſuffered when he ſolicited ordination; but he denies,

denies, in the preface to his Fables, that he ever deſigned to enter into the church; and ſuch a denial he would not have hazarded, if he could have been convicted of falſehood.

Malevolence to the clergy is ſeldom at a great diſtance from irreverence of religion, and Dryden affords no exception to this obſervation. His writings exhibit many paſſages, which, with all the allowance that can be made for characters and occaſions, are ſuch as piety would not have admitted, and ſuch as may vitiate light and unprincipled minds. But there is no reaſon for ſuppoſing that he diſbelieved the religion which he diſobeyed. He forgot his duty rather than diſowned it. His tendency

to

to profaneneſs is the effect of levity, negligence, and looſe converſation, with a deſire of accommodating himſelf to the corruption of the times, by venturing to be wicked as far as he durſt. When he profeſſed himſelf a convert to Popery, he did not pretend to have received any new conviction of the fundamental doctrines of Chriſtianity.

The perſecution of criticks was not the worſt of his vexations; he was much more diſturbed by the importunities of want. His complaints of poverty are ſo frequently repeated, either with the dejection of weakneſs ſinking in helpleſs miſery, or the indignation of merit claiming its tribute from mankind, that it is impoſſible not to deteſt the age which could

could impoſe on ſuch a man the neceſſity of ſuch ſolicitations, or not to deſpiſe the man who could ſubmit to ſuch ſolicitations without neceſſity.

Whether by the world's neglect, or his own imprudence, I am afraid that the greateſt part of his life was paſſed in exigencies. Such outcries were ſurely never uttered but in ſevere pain. Of his ſupplies or his expences no probable eſtimate can now be made. Except the ſalary of the Laureate, to which king James added the office of Hiſtoriographer, perhaps with ſome additional emoluments, his whole revenue ſeems to have been caſual; and it is well known that he ſeldom lives frugally who lives by chance. Hope is always liberal,

liberal, and they that truſt her promiſes make little ſcruple of revelling to-day on the profits of the morrow.

Of his plays the profit was not great, and of the produce of his other works very little intelligence can be had. By diſcourſing with the late amiable Mr. Tonſon, I could not find that any memorials of the tranſactions between his predeceſſor and Dryden had been preſerved, except the following papers:

"I do hereby promiſe to pay John "Dryden, Eſq; or order, on the 25th "of March 1699, the ſum of two hun- "dred and fifty guineas, in conſidera- "tion of ten thouſand verſes, which "the ſaid John Dryden Eſq; is to de- "liver

" liver to me Jacob Tonſon, when
" finiſhed, whereof ſeven thouſand five
" hundred verſes, more or leſs, are al-
" ready in the ſaid Jacob Tonſon's poſ-
" ſeſſion. And I do hereby farther pro-
" miſe, and engage myſelf, to make up
" the ſaid ſum of two hundred and fifty
" guineas three hundred pounds ſter-
" ling to the ſaid John Dryden, Eſq;
" his executors, adminiſtrators, or aſ-
" ſigns, at the beginning of the ſecond
" impreſſion of the ſaid ten thouſand
" verſes.

" In witneſs whereof I have hereunto
" ſet my hand and ſeal, this 20th day of
" March, $169\frac{8}{9}$.

" Jacob Tonſon.

" Sealed

" Sealed and delivered, being firſt
" ſtampt, purſuant to the acts of
" parliament for that purpoſe, in
" the preſence of

" Ben. Portlock.

" Will. Congreve."

" March 24th, 1698,

" Received then of Mr. Jacob Tonſon
" the ſum of two hundred ſixty-eight
" pounds fifteen ſhillings, in purſuance
" of an agreement for ten thouſand
" verſes, to be delivered by me to the
" ſaid Jacob Tonſon, whereof I have al-
" ready delivered to him about ſeven
" thouſand five hundred, more or leſs;
" he the ſaid Jacob Tonſon being obliged
" to make up the foreſaid ſum of two

" hun-

" hundred ſixty-eight pounds fifteen
" ſhillings three hundred pounds, at the
" beginning of the ſecond impreſſion of
" the foreſaid ten thouſand verſes;

" I ſay, received by me

" John Dryden.

" Witneſs Charles Dryden."

Two hundred and fifty guineas, at 1*l.* 1*s.* 6*d.* is 268*l.* 15*s.*

It is manifeſt from the dates of this contract, that it relates to the volume of Fables, which contains about twelve thouſand verſes, and for which therefore the payment muſt have been afterwards enlarged.

I have been told of another letter yet remaining, in which he deſires Tonſon

to bring him money, to pay for a watch which he had ordered for his ſon, and which the maker would not leave without the price.

The inevitable conſequence of poverty is dependence. Dryden had probably no recourſe in his exigencies but to his bookſeller. The particular character of Tonſon I do not know; but the general conduct of traders was much leſs liberal in thoſe times than in our own; their views were narrower, and their manners groſſer. To the mercantile ruggedneſs of that race, the delicacy of the poet was ſometimes expoſed. Lord Bolingbroke, who in his youth had cultivated poetry, related to Dr. King of Oxford, that one day, when he viſited

viſited Dryden, they heard, as they were converſing, another perſon entering the houſe. "This, ſaid Dryden, is Tonſon. You will take care not to depart before he goes away; for I have not completed the ſheet which I promiſed him; and if you leave me unprotected, I muſt ſuffer all the rudeneſs to which his reſentment can prompt his tongue."

What rewards he obtained for his poems, beſides the payment of the bookſeller, cannot be known: Mr. Derrick, who conſulted ſome of his relations, was informed that his Fables obtained five hundred pounds from the dutcheſs of Ormond; a preſent not unſuitable to the magnificence of that ſplendid fa-

mily; and he quotes Moyle, as relating that forty pounds were paid by a muſical ſociety for the uſe of *Alexander's Feaſt*.

In thoſe days the œconomy of government was yet unſettled, and the payments of the Exchequer were dilatory and uncertain: of this diſorder there is reaſon to believe that the Laureat ſometimes felt the effects; for in one of his prefaces he complains of thoſe, who, being intruſted with the diſtribution of the Prince's bounty, ſuffer thoſe that depend upon it to languiſh in penury.

Of his petty habits or ſlight amuſements, tradition has retained little. Of the only two men whom I have found

to

to whom he was perſonally known, one told me that at the houſe which he frequented, called Wills's Coffee-houſe, the appeal upon any literary diſpute was made to him; and the other related, that his armed chair, which in the winter had a ſettled and preſcriptive place by the fire, was in the ſummer placed in the balcony, and that he called the two places his winter and his ſummer ſeat. This is all the intelligence which his two ſurvivors afforded me.

Of one opinion he is very reaſonably ſuſpected, which will do him no honour in the preſent age, though in his own time, at leaſt in the beginning of it, he was far from having it confined to himſelf. There is little doubt that he put

confidence in the prognoſtications of judicial aſtrology. In the Appendix to the Life of Congreve is a narrative of ſome of his predictions wonderfully fulfilled; but I know not the writer's means of information, or character of veracity; and, without authority, it is uſeleſs to mention what is ſo unlikely to be true. That he had the configurations of the planets in his mind, and conſidered them as influencing the affairs of men, he does not forbear to hint.

The utmoſt malice of the ſtars is paſt.—

Now

Now frequent *trines* the happier lights among,
And *high-rais'd Jove*, from his dark priſon freed,
Thoſe weights took off that on his planet hung,
Will glorioufly the new-laid works ſucceed.

He has elſewhere ſhewn his attention to the planetary powers; and in the preface to his Fables has endeavoured obliquely to juſtify his ſuperſtition, by attributing the ſame to ſome of the Ancients.

So ſlight and ſo ſcanty is the knowledge which I have been able to collect concerning the private life and domeſtick

manners of a man, whom every Engliſh generation muſt mention with reverence as a critick and a poet.

DRYDEN may be properly conſidered as the father of Engliſh criticiſm, as the writer who firſt taught us to determine upon principles the merit of compoſition. Of our former poets, the greateſt dramatiſt wrote without rules, conducted through life and nature by a genius that rarely miſled, and rarely deſerted him. Of the reſt, thoſe who knew the laws of propriety had neglected to teach them.

Two

Two *Arts of Engliſh Poetry* were written in the days of Elizabeth by Webb and Puttenham, from which ſomething might be learned, and a few hints had been given by Jonſon and Cowley; but Dryden's *Eſſay on Dramatick Poetry* was the firſt regular treatiſe on the art of writing.

He who, having formed his opinions in the preſent age of Engliſh literature, turns back to peruſe this dialogue, will not perhaps find much increaſe of knowledge, or much novelty of inſtruction; but he is to remember that critical principles were then in the hands of a few, who had gathered them partly from the Ancients, and partly from the Italians and French. The ſtructure of

dramatick poems was not then generally underſtood. Audiences applauded by inſtinct, and poets perhaps often pleaſed by chance.

A writer who obtains his full purpoſe loſes himſelf in his own luſtre. Of an opinion which is no longer doubted, the evidence ceaſes to be examined. Of an art univerſally practiſed, the firſt teacher is forgotten. Learning once made popular is no longer learning; it has the appearance of ſomething which we have beſtowed upon ourſelves, as the dew appears to riſe from the field which it refreſhes.

To judge rightly of an author, we muſt tranſport ourſelves to his time, and examine what were the wants of

his contemporaries, and what were his means of ſupplying them. That which is eaſy at one time was difficult at another. Dryden at leaſt imported his ſcience, and gave his country what it wanted before; or rather, he imported only the materials, and manufactured them by his own ſkill.

The dialogue on the Drama was one of his firſt eſſays of criticiſm, written when he was yet a timorous candidate for reputation, and therefore laboured with that diligence which he might allow himſelf ſomewhat to remit, when his name gave ſanction to his poſitions, and his awe of the public was abated, partly by cuſtom, and partly by ſucceſs. It will not be eaſy to find, in all the opu-

opulence of our language, a treatiſe ſo artfully variegated with ſucceſſive repreſentations of oppoſite probabilities, ſo enlivened with imagery, ſo brightened with illuſtrations. His portraits of the Engliſh dramatiſts are wrought with great ſpirit and diligence. The account of Shakeſpeare may ſtand as a perpetual model of encomiaſtick criticiſm; exact without minuteneſs, and lofty without exaggeration. The praiſe laviſhed by Longinus, on the atteſtation of the heroes of Maranthon, by Demoſthenes, fades away before it. In a few lines is exhibited a character, ſo extenſive in its comprehenſion, and ſo curious in its limitations, that nothing can be added, diminiſhed, or reformed; nor can the editors

tors and admirers of Shakeſpeare, in all their emulation of reverence, boaſt of much more than of having diffuſed and paraphraſed this epitome of excellence, of having changed Dryden's gold for baſer metal, of lower value though of greater bulk.

In this, and in all his other eſſays on the ſame ſubject, the criticiſm of Dryden is the criticiſm of a poet; not a dull collection of theorems, nor a rude detection of faults, which perhaps the cenſor was not able to have committed; but a gay and vigorous diſſertation, where delight is mingled with inſtruction, and where the author proves his right of judgement, by his power of performance.

The

The different manner and effect with which critical knowledge may be conveyed, was perhaps never more clearly exemplified than in the performances of Rymer and Dryden. It was ſaid of a diſpute between two mathematicians, "malim cum Scaligero errare, "quam cum Clavio recte ſapere;" that *it was more eligible to go wrong with one than right with the other.* A tendency of the ſame kind every mind muſt feel at the peruſal of Dryden's prefaces and Rymer's diſcourſes. With Dryden we are wandering in queſt of Truth; whom we find, if we find her at all, dreſt in the graces of elegance; and if we miſs her, the labour of the purſuit rewards itſelf; we are led only through

through fragrance and flowers: Rymer, without taking a nearer, takes a rougher way; every ſtep is to be made through thorns and brambles; and Truth, if we meet her, appears repulſive by her mien, and ungraceful by her habit. Dryden's criticiſm has the majeſty of a queen; Rymer's has the ferocity of a tyrant.

As he had ſtudied with great diligence the art of poetry, and enlarged or rectified his notions, by experience perpetually increaſing, he had his mind ſtored with principles and obſervations; he poured out his knowledge with great liberality, and ſeldom publiſhed any work without a critical diſſertation, by which he encreaſed the book and the price,

price, with little labour to himſelf; for of labour, notwithſtanding the multiplicity of his productions, there is ſufficient reaſon to ſuſpect that he was not a lover. To write *con amore*, with fondneſs for the employment, with perpetual touches and retouches, with unwillingneſs to take leave of his own idea, and an unwearied purſuit of unattainable perfection, was, I think, no part of his character.

His Criticiſm may be conſidered as general or occaſional. In his general precepts, which depend upon the nature of things and the ſtructure of the human mind, he may doubtleſs be ſafely recommended to the confidence of the reader; but his occaſional and particular

lar poſitions were ſometimes intereſted, ſometimes negligent, and ſometimes capricious. It is not without reaſon that Trapp, ſpeaking of the praiſes which he beſtows on Palamon and Arcite, ſays, "Novimus judicium Drydeni de poe-"mate quodam *Chauceri*, pulchro ſane "illo, et admodum laudando, nimirum "quod non modo vere epicum ſit, ſed "Iliada etiam atque Æneada æquet, "imo ſuperet. Sed novimus eodem "tempore viri illius maximi non ſem-"per accuratiſſimas eſſe cenſuras, nec "ad ſeveriſſimam critices normam ex-"actas: illo judice id plerumque op-"timum eſt, quod nunc præ manibus "habet, & in quo nunc occupatur."

He is therefore by no means conſtant to himſelf. His defence and deſertion of dramatick rhyme is generally known. *Spence*, in his remarks on Pope's Odyſſey, produces what he thinks an unconquerable quotation from Dryden's preface to the Eneid, in favour of tranſlating an epick poem into blank verſe; but he forgets that when his author attempted the Iliad, ſome years afterwards, he departed from his own deciſion, and again tranſlated into rhyme.

When he has any objection to obviate, or any licenſe to defend, he is not very ſcrupulous about what he aſſerts, nor very cautious, if the preſent purpoſe be ſerved, not to entangle himſelf

ſelf in his own ſophiſtries. But when all arts are exhauſted, like other hunted animals, he ſometimes ſtands at bay; as he cannot diſown the groſſneſs of one of his plays, he declares that he knows not any law that preſcribes morality to a comick poet.

His remarks on ancient or modern writers are not always to be truſted. His parallel of the verſification of Ovid with that of Claudian has been very juſtly cenſured by *Sewel*. His compariſon of the firſt line of Virgil with the firſt of Statius is not happier. Virgil, he ſays, is ſoft and gentle, and would have thought Statius mad if he had heard him thundering out

Quæ ſuperimpoſito moles geminata coloſſo.

Statius perhaps heats himſelf, as he proceeds, to exaggerations ſomewhat hyperbolical; but undoubtedly Virgil would have been too haſty, if he had condemned him to ſtraw for one ſounding line. Dryden wanted an inſtance, and the firſt that occurred was impreſt into the ſervice.

What he wiſhes to ſay, he ſays at hazard; he cited *Gorbuduc*, which he had never ſeen; gives a falſe account of *Chapman's* verſification; and diſcovers, in the preface to his Fables, that he tranſlated the firſt book of the Iliad, without knowing what was in the ſecond.

It will be difficult to prove that Dryden ever made any great advances in literature. As having diſtinguiſhed himſelf

at

at Weſtminſter under the tuition of Buſby, who advanced his ſcholars to a height of knowledge very rarely attained in grammar-ſchools, he reſided afterwards at Cambridge, it is not to be ſuppoſed that his ſkill in the ancient languages was deficient, compared with that of common ſtudents; but his ſcholaſtick acquiſitions ſeem not proportionate to his opportunities and abilities. He could not, like Milton or Cowley, have made his name illuſtrious merely by his learning. He mentions but few books, and thoſe ſuch as lie in the beaten track of regular ſtudy; from which if ever he departs, he is in danger of loſing himſelf in unknown regions.

In his Dialogue on the Drama, he pronounces with great confidence that the Latin tragedy of Medea is not Ovid's, becauſe it is not ſufficiently intereſting and pathetick. He might have determined the queſtion upon ſurer evidence; for it is quoted by Quintilian as the work of Seneca; and the only line which remains of Ovid's play, for one line is left us, is not there to be found. There was therefore no need of the gravity of conjecture, or the diſcuſſion of plot or ſentiment, to find what was already known upon higher authority than ſuch diſcuſſions can ever reach.

His literature, though not always free from oſtentation, will be commonly found either obvious, and made his own

by the art of dreſſing it; or ſuperficial, which, by what he gives, ſhews what he wanted; or erroneous, haſtily collected, and negligently ſcattered.

Yet it cannot be ſaid that his genius is ever unprovided of matter, or that his fancy languiſhes in penury of ideas. His works abound with knowledge, and ſparkle with illuſtrations. There is ſcarcely any ſcience or faculty that does not ſupply him with occaſional images and lucky ſimilitudes; every page diſcovers a mind very widely acquainted both with art and nature, and in full poſſeſſion of great ſtores of intellectual wealth. Of him that knows much, it is natural to ſuppoſe that he has re nce; yet I rather believe

believe that the knowledge of Dryden was gleaned from accidental intelligence and various converſation, by a quick apprehenſion, a judicious ſelection, and a happy memory, a keen appetite of knowledge, and a powerful digeſtion; by vigilance that permitted nothing to paſs without notice, and a habit of reflection that ſuffered nothing uſeful to be loſt. A mind like Dryden's, always curious, always active, to which every underſtanding was proud to be aſſociated, and of which every one ſolicited the regard, by an ambitious diſplay of himſelf, had a more pleaſant, perhaps a nearer, way to knowledge than by the ſilent progreſs of ſolitary reading. I do not ſuppoſe that he deſpiſed books,

books, or intentionally neglected them; but that he was carried out, by the impetuoſity of his genius, to more vivid and ſpeedy inſtructors; and that his ſtudies were rather deſultory and fortuitous than conſtant and ſyſtematical.

It muſt be confeſſed that he ſcarcely ever appears to want book-learning but when he mentions books; and to him may be transferred the praiſe which he gives his maſter Charles.

His converſation, wit, and parts,
His knowledge in the nobleſt uſeful arts,
Were ſuch, dead authors could not give,
But habitudes of thoſe that live;
Who, lighting him, did greater lights receive:

He

He drain'd from all, and all they knew,
His apprehenſion quick, his judgement true:
That the moſt learn'd with ſhame confeſs
His knowledge more, his reading only leſs.

Of all this, however, if the proof be demanded, I will not undertake to give it; the atoms of probability, of which my opinion has been formed, lie ſcattered over all his works; and by him who thinks the queſtion worth his notice, his works muſt be peruſed with very cloſe attention.

Criticiſm, either didactick or defenſive, occupies almoſt all his proſe, except

cept thoſe pages which he has devoted to his patrons; but none of his prefaces were ever thought tedious. They have not the formality of a ſettled ſtyle, in which the firſt half of the ſentence betrays the other. The clauſes are never balanced, nor the periods modelled; every word ſeems to drop by chance, though it falls into its proper place. Nothing is cold or languid; the whole is airy, animated, and vigorous; what is little, is gay; what is great, is ſplendid. He may be thought to mention himſelf too frequently; but while he forces himſelf upon our eſteem, we cannot refuſe him to ſtand high in his own. Every thing is excuſed by the play of images and the ſpritelineſs of expreſſion.

Though

Though all is eaſy, nothing is feeble; though all ſeems careleſs, there is nothing harſh; and though, ſince his earlier works, more than a century has paſſed, they have nothing yet uncouth or obſolete.

He who writes much, will not eaſily eſcape a manner, ſuch a recurrence of particular modes as may be eaſily noted. Dryden is always *another and the ſame*, he does not exhibit a ſecond time the ſame elegancies in the ſame form, nor appears to have any art other than that of expreſſing with clearneſs what he thinks with vigour. His ſtile could not eaſily be imitated, either ſeriouſly or ludicrouſly, for being always equable and always varied, it has no prominent or diſcriminative cha-

characters. The beauty who is totally free from diſproportion of parts and features cannot be ridiculed by an over-charged reſemblance.

From his proſe however, Dryden derives only his accidental and ſecondary praiſe; the veneration with which his name is pronounced by every cultivator of Engliſh Literature, is paid to him as he refined the language, improved the ſentiments, and tuned the numbers of Engliſh Poetry.

After about half a century of forced thoughts, and rugged metre, ſome advances towards nature and harmony had been already made by Waller and Denham; they had ſhewn that long diſcourſes

in

in rhyme grew more pleaſing when they were broken into couplets, and that verſe conſiſted not only in the number but the arrangement of ſyllables.

But though they did much, who can deny that they left much to do? Their works were not many, nor were their minds of very ample comprehenſion. More examples of more modes of compoſition were neceſſary for the eſtabliſhment of regularity, and the introduction of propriety in word and thought.

Every language of a learned nation neceſſarily divides itſelf into diction ſcholaſtick and popular, grave and familiar, elegant and groſs; and from a nice diſtinction of theſe different parts, ariſes a great

a great part of the beauty of ſtile. But if we except a few minds, the favourites of nature, to whom their own original rectitude was in the place of rules, this delicacy of ſelection was little known to our authors; our ſpeech lay before them in a heap of confuſion, and every man took for every purpoſe what chance might offer him.

There was therefore before the time of Dryden no poetical diction, no ſyſtem of words at once refined from the groſſneſs of domeſtick uſe, and free from the harſhneſs of terms appropriated to particular arts. Words too familiar, or too remote, defeat the purpoſe of a poet. From thoſe ſounds which we hear on ſmall or on coarſe occaſions, we do not eaſily

eaſily receive ſtrong impreſſions, or delightful images, and words to which we are nearly ſtrangers, whenever they occur, draw that attention on themſelves which they ſhould convey to things.

Thoſe happy combinations of words which diſtinguiſh poetry from proſe, had been rarely attempted; we had few elegancies or flowers of ſpeech, the roſes had not yet been plucked from the bramble, or different colours had not been joined to enliven one another.

It may be doubted whether Waller and Denham could have over-born the prejudices which had long prevailed, and which even then were ſheltered by the protection of Cowley. The new verſification, as it was called, may be

conſidered

conſidered as owing its eſtabliſhment to Dryden; from whoſe time it is apparent that Engliſh poetry has had no tendency to relapſe to its former ſavageneſs.

The affluence and comprehenſion of our language is very illuſtriouſly diſplayed in our poetical tranſlations of Ancient Writers; a work which the French ſeem to relinquiſh in deſpair, and which we were long unable to perform with dexterity. Ben Jonſon thought it neceſſary to copy Horace almoſt word by word; Feltham, his contemporary and adverſary, conſiders it as indiſpenſably requiſite in a tranſlation to give line for line. It is ſaid that Sandys, whom Dryden calls the beſt verſifier of the laſt

age, has ſtruggled hard to compriſe every book of his Engliſh Metamorphoſes in the ſame number of verſes with the original. Holyday had nothing in view but to ſhew that he underſtood his author, with ſo little regard to the grandeur of his diction, or the volubility of his numbers, that his metres can hardly be called verſes; they cannot be read without reluctance, nor will the labour always be rewarded by underſtanding them. Cowley ſaw that ſuch *copyers* were a *ſervile race*; he aſſerted his liberty, and ſpread his wings ſo boldly that he left his authors. It was reſerved for Dryden to fix the limits of poetical liberty, and give us juſt rules and examples of tranſlation.

When

When languages are formed upon different principles, it is impoſſible that the ſame modes of expreſſion ſhould always be elegant in both. While they run on together, the cloſeſt tranſlation may be conſidered as the beſt; but when they divaricate, each muſt take its natural courſe. Where correſpondence cannot be obtained, it is neceſſary to be content with ſomething equivalent. *Tranſlation therefore*, ſays Dryden, *is not ſo looſe as paraphraſe, nor ſo cloſe as metaphraſe.*

All poliſhed languages have different ſtyles; the conciſe, the diffuſe, the lofty, and the humble. In the proper choice of ſtyle conſiſts the reſemblance which Dryden principally exacts from

the tranſlator. He is to exhibit his author's thoughts in ſuch a dreſs of diction as the author would have given them, had his language been Engliſh: rugged magnificence is not to be ſoftened: hyperbolical oſtentation is not to be repreſſed, nor ſententious affectation to have its points blunted. A tranſlator is to be like his author; it is not his buſineſs to excel him.

The reaſonableneſs of theſe rules ſeem ſufficient for their vindication; and the effects produced by obſerving them were ſo happy, that I know not whether they were ever oppoſed but by Sir Edward Sherburne, a man whoſe learning was greater than his powers of poetry; and who, being better qualified to give

the meaning than the ſpirit of Seneca, has introduced his verſion of three tragedies by a defence of cloſe tranſlation. The authority of Horace, which the new tranſlators cited in defence of their practice, he has, by a judicious explanation, taken fairly from them; but reaſon wants not Horace to ſupport it.

It ſeldom happens that all the neceſſary cauſes concur to any great effect: will is wanting to power, or power to will, or both are impeded by external obſtructions. The exigencies in which Dryden was condemned to paſs his life, are reaſonably ſuppoſed to have blaſted his genius, to have driven out his works in a ſtate of immaturity, and

to have intercepted the full-blown elegance which longer growth would have ſupplied.

Poverty, like other rigid powers, is ſometimes too haſtily accuſed. If the excellence of Dryden's works was leſſened by his indigence, their number was increaſed; and I know not how it will be proved, that if he had written leſs he would have written better; or that indeed he would have undergone the toil of an author, if he had not been ſolicited by ſomething more preſſing than the love of praiſe.

But as is ſaid by his Sebaſtian,

What had been, is unknown; what is, appears.

We

We know that Dryden's ſeveral productions were ſo many ſucceſſive expedients for his ſupport; his plays were therefore often borrowed, and his poems were almoſt all occaſional.

In an occaſional performance no height of excellence can be expected from any mind, however fertile in itſelf, and however ſtored with acquiſitions. He whoſe work is general and arbitrary, has the choice of his matter, and takes that which his inclination and his ſtudies have beſt qualified him to diſplay and decorate. He is at liberty to delay his publication, till he has ſatisfied his friends and himſelf; till he has reformed his firſt thoughts by ſubſequent examination; and poliſhed away thoſe faults

which the precipitance of ardent compoſition is likely to leave behind it. Virgil is related to have poured out a great number of lines in the morning, and to have paſſed the day in reducing them to fewer.

The occaſional poet is circumſcribed by the narrowneſs of his ſubject. Whatever can happen to man has happened ſo often, that little remains for fancy or invention. We have been all born; we have moſt of us been married; and ſo many have died before us, that our deaths can ſupply but few materials for a poet. In the fate of princes the publick has an intereſt; and what happens to them of good or evil, the poets have always conſidered as buſineſs for the Muſe.

Muſe. But after ſo many inauguratory gratulations, nuptial hymns, and funeral dirges, he muſt be highly favoured by nature, or by fortune, who ſays any thing not ſaid before. Even war and conqueſt, however ſplendid, ſuggeſt no new images; the triumphal chariot of a victorious monarch can be decked only with thoſe ornaments that have graced his predeceſſors.

Not only matter but time is wanting. The poem muſt not be delayed till the occaſion is forgotten. The lucky moments of animated imagination cannot be attended; elegancies and illuſtrations cannot be multiplied by gradual accumulation; the compoſition muſt be diſpatched while converſation is yet buſy, and

and admiration freſh; and haſte is to be made, leſt ſome other event ſhould lay hold upon mankind.

Occaſional compoſitions may however ſecure to a writer the praiſe both of learning and facility; for they cannot be the effect of long ſtudy, and muſt be furniſhed immediately from the treaſures of the mind.

The death of Cromwel was the firſt publick event which called forth Dryden's poetical powers. His heroick ſtanzas have beauties and defects; the thoughts are vigorous, and though not always proper, ſhew a mind replete with ideas; the numbers are ſmooth, and the diction if not altogether correct, is elegant and eaſy.

Davenant ſeems at this time to have been his favourite author, though Gondibert never appears to have been popular; and from Davenant he learned to pleaſe his ear with the ſtanza of four lines alternately rhymed.

Dryden very early formed his verſification: there are in this early production no traces of Donne's or Jonſon's ruggedneſs; but he did not ſo ſoon free his mind from the ambition of forced conceits. In his verſes on the Reſtoration, he ſays of the King's exile,

He, toſs'd by Fate—
Could taſte no ſweets of youth's deſired age,
But found his life too true a pilgrimage.

And

And afterwards, to ſhew how virtue and wiſdom are increaſed by adverſity, he makes this remark:

Well might the ancient poets then confer
On Night the honour'd name of *counſellor*,
Since, ſtruck with rays of proſperous fortune blind,
We light alone in dark afflictions find.

His praiſe of Monk's dexterity compriſes ſuch a cluſter of thoughts unallied to one another, as will not elſewhere be eaſily found:

'Twas Monk, whom Providence deſign'd to looſe
Thoſe real bonds falſe freedom did impoſe,

The

The bleſſed ſaints that watch'd this turning ſcene,
Did from their ſtars with joyful wonder lean,
To ſee ſmall clues draw vaſteſt weights along,
Not in their bulk but in their order ſtrong.
Thus pencils can by one ſlight touch reſtore
Smiles to that changed face that wept before.
With eaſe ſuch foud chimæras we purſue,
As fancy frames for fancy to ſubdue:
But when ourſelves to action we betake,
It ſhuns the mint like gold that chymiſts make:

How

How hard was then his taſk, at once to be
What in the body natural we ſee!
Man's Architect diſtinctly did ordain
The charge of muſcles, nerves, and of the brain;
Thro' viewleſs conduits ſpirits to diſpenſe
The ſprings of motion from the ſeat of ſenſe.
'Twas not the haſty product of a day,
But the well-ripen'd fruit of wiſe delay.
He, like a patient angler, ere he ſtrook,
Would let them play a-while upon the hook.
Our healthful food the ſtomach labours thus,
At firſt embracing what it ſtraight doth cruſh.

Wiſe

Wiſe leaches will not vain receipts obtrude,
While growing pains pronounce the humours crude;
Deaf to complaints, they wait upon the ill,
Till ſome ſafe criſis authorize their ſkill.

He had not yet learned, indeed he never learned well, to forbear the improper uſe of mythology. After having rewarded the heathen deities for their care,

With *Alga* who the ſacred altar ſtrows?
To all the ſea-gods Charles an offering owes;
A bull to thee, Portunus, ſhall be ſlain;
A ram to you, ye Tempeſts of the Main.

He

He tells us, in the language of religion,

Prayer ſtorm'd the ſkies, and raviſh'd
Charles from thence,
As heav'n itſelf is took by violence.

And afterwards mentions one of the moſt awful paſſages of Sacred Hiſtory.

Other conceits there are, too curious to be quite omitted; as,

For by example moſt we ſinn'd before,
And, glaſs-like, clearneſs mix'd with
frailty bore.

How far he was yet from thinking it neceſſary to found his ſentiments on Nature, appears from the extravagance of his fictions and hyperboles:

The winds, that never moderation knew,
Afraid to blow too much, too faintly blew;

Or,

Or, out of breath with joy, could not
enlarge
Their ſtraiten'd lungs.—

It is no longer motion cheats your view;
As you meet it, the land approacheth
you;
The land returns, and in the white it
wears
The marks of penitence and ſorrow
bears.

I know not whether this fancy, however little be its value, was not borrowed. A French poet read to Malherbe ſome verſes, in which he repreſents France as moving out of its place to receive the King. "Though this," ſaid Malherbe, "was in my time, I do "not remember it."

His poem on the *Coronation* has a more even tenour of thought. Some lines deſerve to be quoted:

You have already quench'd ſedition's brand,
And zeal that burnt it, only warms the land;
The jealous ſects that durſt not truſt their cauſe
So far from their own will as to the laws,
Him for their umpire and their ſynod take,
And their appeal alone to Cæſar make.

Here may be found one particle of that old verſification, of which, I believe, in all his works, there is not another:

Nor is it duty, or our hope alone,
Creates that joy, but full *fruition*.

In

In the verſes to the lord chancellor Clarendon, two years afterwards, is a conceit ſo hopeleſs at the firſt view, that few would have attempted it; and ſo ſucceſsfully laboured, that though at laſt it gives the mind more perplexity than pleaſure, and ſeems hardly worth the ſtudy that it coſts, yet it muſt be valued as a proof of a mind at once ſubtle and comprehenſive:

In open proſpect nothing bounds our eye,
Until the earth ſeems join'd unto the ſky:
So in this hemiſphere our outmoſt view
Is only bounded by our king and you:
Our ſight is limited where you are join'd,
And beyond that no farther heav'n can find.

So well your virtues do with his agree,
That, tho' your orbs of different greatneſs be,
Yet both are for each other's uſe diſpos'd,
His to encloſe, and your's to be enclos'd.
Nor could another in your room have been,
Except an emptineſs had come between.

The compariſon of the Chancellor to the Indies leaves all reſemblance too far behind it:

And as the Indies were not found before
Thoſe rich perfumes which from the happy ſhore
The winds upon their balmy wings convey'd,
Whoſe guilty ſweetneſs firſt their world

So

So by your counſels we are brought to
view
A new and undiſcover'd world in you.

There is another compariſon, for there is little elſe in the poem, of which, though perhaps it cannot be explained into plain proſaick meaning, the mind perceives enough to be delighted, and readily forgives its obſcurity for its magnificence:

How ſtrangely active are the arts of peace,
Whoſe reſtleſs motions leſs than wars do
ceaſe!
Peace is not freed from labour, but from
noiſe;
And war more force, but not more pains
employs:

Such is the mighty ſwiftneſs of your
mind,
That, like the earth's, it leaves our ſenſe
behind,
While you ſo ſmoothly turn and rowl
our ſphere,
That rapid motion does but reſt appear.
For as in nature's ſwiftneſs, with the
throng
Of flying orbs while our's is born along,
All ſeems at reſt to the deluded eye,
Mov'd by the ſoul of the ſame harmony:
So carry'd on by our unwearied care,
We reſt in peace, and yet in motion ſhare.

To this ſucceed four lines, which perhaps afford Dryden's firſt attempt at thoſe penetrating remarks on human nature,

for

for which he ſeems to have been peculiarly formed:

Let envy then thoſe crimes within you ſee,
From which the happy never muſt be free;
Envy that does with miſery reſide,
The joy and the revenge of ruin'd pride.

Into this poem he ſeems to have collected all his powers; and after this he did not often bring upon his anvil ſuch ſtubborn and unmalleable thoughts; but, as a ſpecimen of his abilities to unite the moſt unſociable matter, he has concluded with lines, of which I think not myſelf obliged to tell the meaning:

Yet unimpair'd with labours, or with time,
Your age but ſeems to a new youth to climb.
Thus heav'nly bodies do our time beget,
And meaſure change, but ſhare no part of it:
And ſtill it ſhall without a weight increaſe,
Like this new year, whoſe motions never ceaſe.
For ſince the glorious courſe you have begun
Is led by Charles, as that is by the ſun,
It muſt both weightleſs and immortal prove,
Becauſe the centre of it is above.

In the *Annus Mirabilis* he returned to the quatrain, which from that time he totally

totally quitted, perhaps from this experience of its inconvenience. This is one of his greateſt attempts. He had ſubjects equal to his abilities, a great naval war, and the Fire of London. Battles have always been deſcribed in heroick poetry; but a ſea-fight and artillery had yet ſomething of novelty. New arts are long in the world before poets deſcribe them; for they borrow every thing from their predeceſſors, and commonly derive very little from nature or from life. Boileau was the firſt French writer that had ever hazarded in verſe the mention of modern war, or the effects of gunpowder. We, who are leſs afraid of novelty, had already poſſeſſion of thoſe dreadful images: Waller had

de-

deſcribed a ſea-fight. Milton had not yet transferred the invention of fire-arms to the rebellious angels.

This poem is written with great diligence, yet does not fully anſwer the expectation raiſed by ſuch ſubjects and ſuch a writer. With the ſtanza of Davenant he has ſometimes his vein of parentheſis, and incidental diſquiſition, and ſtops his narrative for a wiſe remark.

The general fault is, that he affords more ſentiment than deſcription, and does not ſo much impreſs ſcenes upon the fancy, as deduce conſequences and make compariſons.

The initial ſtanzas have rather too much reſemblance to the firſt lines of Waller's

Waller's poem on the war with Spain; perhaps ſuch a beginning is natural, and could not be avoided without affectation. Both Waller and Dryden might take their hint from the poem on the civil war of Rome, *Orbem jam totum, &c.*

Of the king collecting his navy, he ſays,

It ſeems as every ſhip their ſovereign knows,
His awful ſummons they ſo ſoon obey;
So hear the ſcaly herds when Proteus blows,
And ſo to paſture follow through the ſea.

It would not be hard to believe that Dryden had written the two firſt lines ſeriouſly, and that ſome wag had added the

the two latter in burleſque. Who would expect the lines that immediately follow, which are indeed perhaps indecently hyperbolical, but certainly in a mode totally different?

To ſee this fleet upon the ocean move,
Angels drew wide the curtains of the ſkies;
And heaven, as if there wanted lights above,
For tapers made two glaring comets riſe.

The deſcription of the attempt at Bergen will afford a very compleat ſpecimen of the deſcriptions in this poem:

And

And now approach'd their fleet from India fraught,
With all the riches of the riſing ſun:
And precious ſand from ſouthern climates brought,
The fatal regions where the war begun.

Like hunted caſtors, conſcious of their ſtore,
Their way-laid wealth to Norway's coaſt they bring:
Then firſt the North's cold boſom ſpices bore,
And winter brooded on the eaſtern ſpring.

By the rich ſcent we found our perfum'd prey,
Which, flank'd with rocks, did cloſe in covert lie:

And

And round about their murdering cannon lay,
At once to threaten and invite the eye.

Fiercer than cannon, and than rocks more hard,
The Engliſh undertake th'unequal war:
Seven ſhips alone, by which the port is barr'd,
Beſiege the Indies, and all Denmark dare.

Theſe fight like huſbands, but like lovers thoſe:
Theſe fain would keep, and thoſe more fain enjoy:
And to ſuch height their frantic paſſion grows,
That what both love, both hazard to deſtroy.

Amidſt whole heaps of ſpices lights a ball,
And now their odours arm'd againſt them fly:
Some preciouſly by ſhatter'd porcelain fall,
And ſome by aromatic ſplinters die.

And tho' by tempeſts of the prize bereft,
In heaven's inclemency ſome eaſe we find:
Our foes we vanquiſh'd by our valour left,
And only yielded to the ſeas and wind.

In this manner is the ſublime too often mingled with the ridiculous. The Dutch ſeek a ſhelter for a wealthy fleet: this ſurely needed no illuſtration, yet they

they muſt fly, not like all the reſt of mankind on the ſame occaſion, but *like hunted caſtors*; and they might with ſtrict propriety be hunted; for we winded them by our noſes—their *perfumes* betrayed them. The *Husband* and the *Lover*, though of more dignity than the Caſtor, are images too domeſtick to mingle properly with the horrors of war. The two quatrains that follow are worthy of the author.

The account of the different ſenſations with which the two fleets retired, when the night parted them, is one of the faireſt flowers of Engliſh poetry.

The night comes on, we eager to purſue
The combat ſtill, and they aſham'd to leave:

Till the laſt ſtreaks of dying day with-
drew,
And doubtful moon-light did our rage
deceive.
In th' Engliſh fleet each ſhip reſounds
with joy,
And loud applauſe of their great leader's
fame:
In firy dreams the Dutch they ſtill de-
ſtroy,
And, ſlumbering, ſmile at the imagin'd
flame.
Not ſo the Holland fleet, who, tir'd and
done,
Stretch'd on their decks like weary oxen
lie;
Faint ſweats all down their mighty mem-
bers run,
(Vaſt bulks which little ſouls but ill
ſupply.)

In dreams they fearful precipices tread,
Or, ſhipwreck'd, labour to ſome diſtant
ſhore:
Or, in dark churches, walk among the
dead;
They wake with horror, and dare ſleep
no more.

It is a general rule in poetry, that all appropriated terms of art ſhould be ſunk in general expreſſions, becauſe poetry is to ſpeak an univerſal language. This rule is ſtill ſtronger with regard to arts not liberal, or confined to few, and therefore far removed from common knowledge; and of this kind, certainly, is technical navigation. Yet Dryden was of opinion that a ſea-fight ought to be deſcribed in the nautical language; *and*

certainly, ſays he, *as thoſe who in a logical diſputation keep to general terms would hide a fallacy, ſo thoſe who do it in any poetical deſcription would veil their ignorance.*

Let us then appeal to experience; for by experience at laſt we learn as well what will pleaſe as what will profit. In the battle, his terms ſeem to have been blown away; but he deals them liberally in the dock:

So here ſome pick out bullets from the ſides,
Some drive old *okum* thro' each *ſeam* and rift:
Their left-hand does the *calking iron* guide,
The rattling mallet with the right they lift.

With boiling pitch another near at hand
(From friendly Sweden brought) the *ſeams inſtops:*
Which, well laid o'er, the ſalt-ſea waves withſtand,
And ſhake them from the riſing beak in drops.

Some the *gall'd* ropes with dawby *marling* bind,
Or ſear-cloth maſts with ſtrong *tarpawling* coats:
To try new *ſhrouds* one mounts into the wind,
And one below, their eaſe or ſtiffneſs notes.

I ſuppoſe here is not one term which every reader does not wiſh away.

His

His digreſſion to the original and progreſs of navigation, with his proſpect of the advancement which it ſhall receive from the Royal Society, then newly inſtituted, may be conſidered as an example ſeldom equalled of ſeaſonable excurſion and artful return.

One line, however, leaves me diſcontented; he ſays, that, by the help of the philoſophers,

Inſtructed ſhips ſhall ſail to quick commerce,
By which remoteſt regions are allied.—

Which he is conſtrained to explain in a note, *By a more exact meaſure of longitude.* It had better become Dryden's learning and genius to have laboured ſcience

into poetry, and have ſhewn, by explaining longitude, that verſe did not refuſe the ideas of philoſophy.

His deſcription of the Fire is painted by reſolute meditation, out of a mind better formed to reaſon than to feel. The conflagration of a city, with all its tumults of concomitant diſtreſs, is one of the moſt dreadful ſpectacles which this world can offer to human eyes; yet it ſeems to raiſe little emotion in the breaſt of the poet; he watches the flame coolly from ſtreet to ſtreet, with now a reflection, and now a ſimile, till at laſt he meets the king, for whom he makes a ſpeech, rather tedious in a time ſo buſy; and then follows again the progreſs of the fire.

There

There are, however, in this part ſome paſſages that deſerve attention; as in the beginning.

The diligence of trades and noiſeful gain
And luxury more late aſleep were laid;
All was the night's, and in her ſilent reign
No ſound the reſt of Nature did invade
In this deep quiet —

The expreſſion *All was the night's* is taken from Seneca, who remarks on Virgil's line,

Omnia noctis erant placida compoſta quiete,

that he might have concluded better,

Omnia noctis erant.

The following quatrain is vigorous and animated.

The ghoſts of traytors from the bridge
descend
With bold fanatick ſpectres to rejoice;
About the fire into a dance they bend
And ſing their ſabbath notes with feeble
voice.

His prediction of the improvements which ſhall be made in the new city is elegant and poetical, and, with an event which Poets cannot always boaſt, has been happily verified. The poem concludes with a ſimile that might have better been omitted.

Dryden, when he wrote this poem, ſeems not yet fully to have formed his verſification, or ſettled his ſyſtem of propriety.

From

From this time, he addicted himself almoſt wholly to the ſtage, *to which*, ſays he, *my genius never much inclined me*, merely as the moſt profitable market for poetry. By writing tragedies in rhyme he continued to improve his diction and his numbers. According to the opinion of *Harte*, who had ſtudied his works with great attention, he ſettled his principles of verſification in 1676, when he produced the play of *Aureng Zeb*; and according to his own account of the ſhort time in which he wrote *Tyrannick Love*, and the *State of Innocence*, he ſoon obtained the full effect of diligence, and added facility to exactneſs.

Rhyme has been ſo long baniſhed from the theatre, that we know not its effect

effect upon the paſſions of an audience; but it has this convenience, that ſentences ſtand more independent on each other, and ſtriking paſſages are therefore eaſily ſelected and retained. Thus the deſcription of Night in the *Indian Emperor*, and the riſe and fall of empire in the *Conqueſt of Granada* are more frequently repeated than any lines in *All for Love*, or *Don Sebaſtian*.

To ſearch his plays for vigorous ſallies, and ſententious elegancies, or to fix the dates of any little pieces which he wrote by chance, or by ſolicitation, were labour too tedious and minute.

His dramatic labours did not ſo wholly abſorb his thoughts but that he promulgated the laws of tranſlation in a preface

preface to the Engliſh Epiſtles of Ovid, one of which he tranſlated himſelf, and another in conjunction with the Earl of Mulgrave.

Abſalom and Achitophel is a work ſo well known, that particular criticiſm is ſuperfluous. If it be conſidered as a poem political and controverſial, it will be found to compriſe all the excellencies of which the ſubject is ſuſceptible; acrimony of cenſure, elegance of praiſe, artful delineation of characters, variety and vigour of ſentiment, happy turns of language and pleaſing harmony of numbers; and all theſe raiſed to ſuch a height as can ſcarcely be found in any other Engliſh compoſition.

It

It is not, however, without faults; ſome lines are inelegant or improper, and too many are irreligiouſly licentious. The original ſtructure of the poem was defective; allegories drawn to great length will always break; Charles could not run continually parallel with David.

The ſubject had likewiſe another inconvenience: it admitted little imagery or deſcription, and a long poem of mere ſentiments eaſily becomes tedious; though all the parts are forcible, and every line kindles new rapture, the reader, if not relieved by the interpoſition of ſomething that ſooths the fancy, grows weary of admiration, and defers the reſt.

As

As an approach to hiſtorical truth was neceſſary, the action and cataſtrophe were not in the poet's power; there is therefore an unpleaſing diſproportion between the beginning and the end. We are alarmed by a faction formed out of many ſects various in their principles, but agreeing in their purpoſe of miſchief, formidable for their numbers and ſtrong by their ſupports, while the king's friends are few and weak. The chiefs on either part are ſet forth to view; but when expectation is at the height, the king makes a ſpeech, and

Henceforth a ſeries of new times began.

Who can forbear to think of an enchanted caſtle, with a wide moat and

lofty battlements, walls of marble, and gates of braſs, which vaniſhes at once into air, when the deſtined knight blows his horn before it?

In the ſecond part, written by *Tate*, there is a long inſertion, which for poignancy of ſatire, exceeds any part of the former. Perſonal reſentment, though no laudable motive to ſatire, can add great force to general principles. Self-love is a buſy prompter.

The *Medal*, written upon the ſame principles with *Abſalom and Achitophel*, but upon a narrower plan, gives leſs pleaſure, though it diſcovers equal abilities in the writer. The ſuperſtructure cannot extend beyond the foundation; a ſingle character or incident

dent cannot furniſh as many ideas, as a ſeries of events, or multiplicity of agents. This poem therefore, ſince time has left it to itſelf, is not much read, nor perhaps generally underſtood, yet it abounds with touches both of humorous and ſerious ſatire. The picture of a man whoſe propenſions to miſchief are ſuch, that his beſt actions are but inability of wickedneſs, is very ſkilfully delineated and ſtrongly coloured.

Power was his aim: but thrown from that pretence,
The wretch turn'd loyal in his own defence,
And malice reconcil'd him to his Prince.

Him

Him, in the anguiſh of his ſoul, he ſerv'd;
Rewarded faſter ſtill than he deſerv'd:
Behold him now exalted into truſt;
His counſels oft convenient, ſeldom juſt.
E'en in the moſt ſincere advice he gave,
He had a grudging ſtill to be a knave.
The frauds he learnt in his fanatic years,
Made him uneaſy in his lawful gears:
At leaſt as little honeſt as he cou'd:
And, like white witches, miſchievouſly good.
To his firſt bias, longingly, he leans;
And rather wou'd be great by wicked means.

The *Threnodia*, which by a term, I am afraid neither authorized nor analogical,

logical, he calls *Auguſtalis*, is not among his happieſt productions. Its firſt and obvious defect is the irregularity of its metre, to which the ears of that age, however, were accuſtomed. What is worſe, it has neither tenderneſs nor dignity, it is neither magnificent nor pathetick. He ſeems to look round him for images which he cannot find, and what he has he diſtorts by endeavouring to enlarge them. He is, he ſays, *petrified with grief*; but the marble ſometimes relents, and trickles in a joke.

The ſons of art all med'cines try'd,
And every noble remedy apply'd;

With emulation each eſſay'd
His utmoſt ſkill; *nay more, they pray'd:*
Was never loſing game with better conduct play'd.

He had been a little inclined to merriment before upon the prayers of a nation for their dying ſovereign, nor was he ſerious enough to keep heathen fables out of his religion.

With him th' innumberable croud of armed prayers
Knock'd at the gates of heav'n and knock'd aloud;
The firſt well-meaning rude petitioners,
All for his life aſſail'd the throne,
All would have brib'd the ſkies by offering up their own.

So

So great a throng not heaven itſelf could bar;
'Twas almoſt borne by force as in the giants war.
The prayers, at leaſt, for his reprieve were heard;
His death, like Hezekiah's, was deferr'd.

There is throughout the compoſition a deſire of ſplendor without wealth. In the concluſion, he ſeems too much pleaſed with the proſpect of the new reign to have lamented his old maſter with much ſincerity.

He did not miſcarry in this attempt for want of ſkill either in lyrick or elegiack poety. His poem *on the death* of Mrs. *Killigrew*, is undoubtedly the

nobleſt ode that our language ever has produced. The firſt part flows with a torrent of enthuſiaſm. *Fervet immenſuſque ruit.* All the ſtanzas indeed are not equal. An imperial crown cannot be one continued diamond; the gems muſt be held together by ſome leſs valuable matter.

In his firſt ode for Cecilia's day, which is loſt in the ſplendor of the ſecond, there are paſſages which would have dignified any other poet. The firſt ſtanza is vigorous and elegant, though the word *diapaſon* is too technical, and the rhymes are too remote from one another.

From

From harmony, from heavenly harmony,
This univerſal frame began:
When nature underneath a heap of
jarring atoms lay,
And could not heave her head,
The tuneful voice was heard from high,
Ariſe ye more than dead.
Then cold and hot, and moiſt and dry,
In order to their ſtations leap,
And muſic's power obey.
From harmony, from heavenly harmony,
This univerſal frame began:
From harmony to harmony
Through all the compaſs of the notes it
ran,
The diapaſon cloſing full in man.

The concluſion is likewiſe ſtriking, but it includes an image ſo awful in itſelf,

that it can owe little to poetry; and I could wiſh the antitheſis of *muſick untuning* had found ſome other place.

As from the power of ſacred lays
The ſpheres began to move,
And ſung the great Creator's praiſe
To all the bleſs'd above.
So when the laſt and dreadful hour
This crumbling pageant ſhall devour,
The trumpet ſhall be heard on high,
The dead ſhall live, the living die,
And muſic ſhall untune the ſky.

Of his ſkill in Elegy he has given a ſpecimen in his *Eleonora*, of which the following lines diſcover their author.

Tho' all theſe rare endowments of the mind
Were in a narrow ſpace of life confin'd,

The figure was with full perfection crown'd;
Tho' not ſo large an orb, as truly round.
As when in glory, thro' the public place,
The ſpoils of conquer'd nations were to paſs,
And but one day for triumph was allow'd,
The conſul was conſtrain'd his pomp to crow'd;
And ſo the ſwift proceſſion hurry'd on,
That all, tho' not diſtinctly, might be ſhown:
So in the ſtraiten'd bounds of life confin'd,
She gave but glimpſes of her glorious mind;

And multitudes of virtues paſs'd along;
Each preſſing foremoſt in the mighty throng,
Ambitious to be ſeen, and then make room
For greater multitudes, that were to come.
Yet unemploy'd no minute ſlipp'd away;
Moments were precious in ſo ſhort a ſtay.
The haſte of heaven to have her was ſo great,
That ſome were ſingle acts, tho' each compleat;
And every act ſtood ready to repeat.

This piece, however, is not without its faults, there is ſo much likeneſs in the initial compariſon, that there is no illuſtration.

illuſtration. As a king would be lamented, Eleonora was lamented.

As when ſome great and gracious monarch dies,
Soft whiſpers, firſt, and mournful murmurs riſe
Among the ſad attendants; then the ſound
Soon gathers voice, and ſpreads the news around,
Thro' town and country, till the dreadful blaſt
Is blown to diſtant colonies at laſt;
Who, then, perhaps, were offering vows in vain,
For his long life, and for his happy reign:

So

So ſlowly by degrees, unwilling fame
Did matchleſs Eleonora's fate proclaim,
Till public as the loſs the news became.

This is little better than to ſay in praiſe of a ſhrub, that it is as green as a tree, or of a brook, that it waters a garden, as a river waters a country.

Dryden confeſſes that he did not know the lady whom he celebrates; the praiſe being therefore inevitably general, fixes no impreſſion upon the reader, nor excites any tendency to love, nor much deſire of imitation. Knowledge of the ſubject is to the poet, what materials are to the architect.

The

The *Religio Laici*, which borrows its title from the *Religio Medici* of Browne, is almoſt the only work of Dryden which can be conſidered as a voluntary effuſion; in this, therefore, it might be hoped, that the full effulgence of his genius would be found. But unhappily the ſubject is rather argumentative than poetical: he intended only a ſpecimen of metrical diſputation.

> And this unpoliſh'd rugged verſe I choſe,
> As fitteſt for diſcourſe, and neareſt proſe.

This, however, is a compoſition of great excellence in its kind, in which the familiar is very properly diverſified with the ſolemn, and the grave with the humorous;

morous; in which metre has neither weakened the force, nor clouded the perſpicuity of argument; nor will it be eaſy to find another example equally happy of this middle kind of writing, which though proſaick in ſome parts, riſes to high poetry in others, and neither towers to the ſkies, nor creeps along the ground.

Of the ſame kind or not far diſtant from it is, the *Hind and Panther*, the longeſt of all Dryden's original poems; an allegory intended to comprize and to decide the controverſy between the Romaniſts and Proteſtants. The ſcheme of the work is injudicious and incommodious; for what can be more abſurd than that one beaſt ſhould counſel another to reſt her faith upon a pope and

council? He ſeems well enough ſkilled in the uſual topicks of argument, endeavours to ſhew the neceſſity of an infallible judge, and reproaches the Reformers with want of unity; but is weak enough to aſk, why ſince we ſee without knowing how, we may not have an infallible judge without knowing where.

The *Hind* at one time is afraid to drink at the common brook, becauſe ſhe may be worried; but walking home with the *Panther*, talks by the way of the *Nicene Fathers*, and at laſt declares herſelf to be the Catholic church.

This abſurdity was very properly ridiculed in the *City Mouſe* and *Country Mouſe* of *Montague* and *Prior*; and in the detection and cenſure of the incon-

incongruity of the fiction chiefly conſiſts the value of their performance, which, whatever reputation it might obtain by the help of temporary paſſions, ſeems to readers almoſt a century diſtant, not very forcible or animated.

Pope, whoſe judgement was perhaps a little bribed by the ſubject, uſed to mention this poem as the moſt correct ſpecimen of Dryden's verſification. It was indeed written when he had completely formed his manner, and may be ſuppoſed to exhibit, negligence excepted, his deliberate and ultimate ſcheme of metre.

We may therefore reaſonably infer, that he did not approve the perpetual uniformity which confines the

ſenſe

ſenſe to couplets, ſince he has broken his lines in the initial paragraph.

A milk-white Hind, immortal and unchang'd,
Fed on the lawns, and in the foreſt rang'd;
Without unſpotted, innocent within,
She fear'd no danger, for ſhe knew no ſin.
Yet had ſhe oft been chac'd with horns and hounds
And Scythian ſhafts, and many winged wounds
Aim'd at her heart; was often forc'd to fly,
And doom'd to death, though fated not to die.

Theſe lines are lofty, elegant, and muſical, notwithſtanding the interruption

tion of the pauſe, of which the effect is rather increaſe of pleaſure by variety than offence by ruggedneſs.

To the firſt part it was his intention, he ſays, *to give the majeſtick turn of heroick poeſy*; and perhaps he might have executed his deſign not unſucceſsfully, had not an opportunity of ſatire, which he cannot forbear, fallen ſometimes in his way. The character of a Preſbyterian, whoſe emblem is the *Wolf*, is not very heroically majeſtick.

> More haughty than the reſt, the wolfiſh race
> Appear with belly gaunt and famiſh'd face:
> Never was ſo deform'd a beaſt of grace.

His

His ragged tail betwixt his legs he wears,
Cloſe clapp'd for ſhame; but his rough creaſt he rears,
And pricks up his predeſtinating ears.

His general character of the other ſorts of beaſts that never go to church, though ſpritely and keen, has, however, not much of heroick poeſy.

Theſe are the chief; to number o'er the reſt,
And ſtand, like Adam, naming every beaſt,
Were weary work; nor will the muſe deſcribe
A ſlimy-born, and ſun-begotten tribe;

Who far from ſteeples and their ſacred
ſound,
In fields their fullen conventicles found.
Theſe groſs, half-animated, lumps I
leave;
Nor can I think what thoughts they can
conceive;
But if they think at all, 'tis ſure no
higher
Than matter, put in motion, may aſpire;
Souls that can ſcarce ferment their
maſs of clay;
So droſſy, ſo diviſible are they,
As would but ſerve pure bodies for
allay:
Such ſouls as ſhards produce, ſuch
beetle things
As only buz to heaven with evening
wings;

Strike

Strike in the dark, offending but by chance;
Such are the blindfold blows of ignorance.
They know not beings, and but hate a name;
To them the Hind and Panther are the ſame.

One more inſtance, and that taken from the narrative part, where ſtyle was more in his choice, will ſhow how ſteadily he kept his reſolution of heroic dignity.

For when the herd, ſuffic'd, did late repair
To ferny heaths, and to their foreſt laire,

She made a mannerly excuſe to ſtay,
Proffering the Hind to wait her half the way:
That ſince the ſky was clear, an hour of talk
Might help her to beguile the tedious walk.
With much good-will the motion was embrac'd,
To chat a while on their adventures paſs'd:
Nor had the grateful Hind ſo ſoon forgot
Her friend and fellow-ſufferer in the plot.
Yet wondering how of late ſhe grew eſtrang'd,
Her forehead cloudy and her count'nance chang'd,

She

She thought this hour th' occaſion would preſent
To learn her ſecret cauſe of diſcontent,
Which well ſhe hop'd, might be with eaſe redreſs'd,
Conſidering her a well-bred civil beaſt,
And more a gentlewoman than the reſt.
After ſome common talk what rumours ran,
The lady of the ſpotted muff began.

The ſecond and third parts he profeſſes to have reduced to diction more familiar and more ſuitable to diſpute and converſation; the difference is not, however, very eaſily perceived; the firſt has familiar and the two others have ſonorous lines. The original incongruity runs through the whole; the king is now

Cæſar, and now the *Lyon*; and the name *Pan* is given to the Supreme Being.

But when this conſtitutional abſurdity is forgiven, the poem muſt be confeſſed to be written with great ſmoothneſs of metre, a wide extent of knowledge, and an abundant multiplicity of images; the controverſy is embelliſhed with pointed ſentences, diverſified by illuſtrations, and enlivened by ſallies of invective. Some of the facts to which alluſions are made are now become obſcure, and perhaps there may be many ſatirical paſſages little underſtood.

As it was by its nature a work of defiance, a compoſition which would naturally be examined with the utmoſt acrimony of criticiſm, it was probably laboured

laboured with uncommon attention; an there are, indeed, few negligences in the ſubordinate parts. The original impropriety, and the ſubſequent unpopularity of the ſubject, added to the ridiculouſneſs of its firſt elements, has ſunk it into neglect; but it may be uſefully ſtudied, as an example of poetical ratiocination, in which the argument ſuffers little from the metre.

In the poem on *the Birth of the Prince of Wales*, nothing is very remarkable but the exorbitant adulation, and the inſenſibility of the precipice on which the king was then ſtanding, which the laureate apparently ſhared with the reſt of the courtiers. A few months cured him of controverſy, diſmiſſed him from court,

and made him again a playwright and tranſlator.

Of Juvenal there had been a tranſlation by Stapylton, and another by Holiday; neither of them is very poetical. Stapylton is more ſmooth, and Holiday's is more eſteemed for the learning of his notes. A new verſion was propoſed to the poets of that time, and undertaken by them in conjunction. The main deſign was conducted by Dryden, whoſe reputation was ſuch that no man was unwilling to ſerve the Muſes under him.

The general character of this tranſlation will be given, when it is ſaid to preſerve the wit, but to want the dignity of the original. The peculiarity of Juvenal

venal is a mixture of gaiety and ſtatelineſs, of pointed ſentences and declamatory grandeur. His points have not been neglected; but his grandeur none of the band ſeemed to conſider as neceſſary to be imitated, except *Creech*, who undertook the thirteenth ſatire. It is therefore perhaps poſſible to give a better repreſentation of that great ſatiriſt, even in thoſe parts which Dryden himſelf has tranſlated, ſome paſſages excepted, which will never be excelled.

With Juvenal was publiſhed Perſius, tranſlated wholly by Dryden. This work, though like all the other productions of Dryden it may have ſhining parts, ſeems to have been written merely for wages, in an uniform mediocrity, with-

without any eager endeavour after excellence, or laborious effort of the mind.

There wanders an opinion among the readers of poetry, that one of theſe ſatires is an exerciſe of the ſchool. Dryden ſays that he once tranſlated it at ſchool; but not that he preſerved or publiſhed the juvenile performance.

Not long afterwards he undertook, perhaps the moſt arduous work of its kind, a tranſlation of Virgil, for which he had ſhewn how well he was qualified by his verſion of the Pollio, and two epiſodes, one of Niſus and Euryalus, the other of Mezentius and Lauſus.

In the compariſon of Homer and Virgil, the diſcriminative excellence

of

of Homer is elevation and comprehenſion of thought, and that of Virgil is, grace and ſplendor of diction. The beauties of Homer are therefore difficult to be loſt, and thoſe of Virgil difficult to be retained. The maſſy trunk of ſentiment is ſafe by its ſolidity, but the bloſſoms of elocution eaſily drop away. The author, having the choice of his own images, ſelects thoſe which he can beſt adorn: the tranſlator muſt, at all hazards, follow his original, and expreſs thoughts which perhaps he would not have choſen. When to this primary difficulty is added the inconvenience of a language ſo much inferior in harmony to the Latin, it cannot be expected that they who read the

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Georgick and the Eneid ſhould be much delighted with any verſion.

All theſe obſtacles Dryden ſaw, and all theſe he determined to encounter. The expectation of his work was undoubtedly great; the nation conſidered its honour as intereſted in the event. One gave him the different editions of his author, and another helped him in the ſubordinate parts. The arguments of the ſeveral books were given him by Addiſon.

The hopes of the publick were not diſappointed. He produced, ſays Pope, *the moſt noble and ſpirited tranſlation that I know in any language.* It certainly excelled whatever had appeared in Engliſh, and appears to have ſatisfied his friends,

friends, and, for the moſt part, to have ſilenced his enemies. Milbourne, indeed, a clergyman, attacked it; but his outrages ſeem to be the ebullitions of a mind agitated by ſtronger reſentment than bad poetry can excite, and previouſly reſolved not to be pleaſed.

His criticiſm extends only to the Preface, Paſtorals, and Georgicks; and, as he profeſſes, to give this antagoniſt an opportunity of repriſal, he has added his own verſion of the firſt and fourth Paſtorals, and the firſt Georgick. The world has forgotten his book; but ſince his attempt has given him a place in literary hiſtory, I will preſerve a ſpecimen of his criticiſm, by inſerting his remarks on the invocation before the firſt

Geor-

Georgick, and of his poetry, by annexing his own verſion.

Ver. 1. "*What makes a plenteous harveſt, when to turn, The fruitful ſoil, and when to ſow the corn*—It's *unlucky*, they ſay, *to ſtumble at the threſhold*, but what has a *plenteous harveſt* to do here? *Virgil* would not pretend to preſcribe *rules* for *that* which depends not on the *huſbandman's* care, but the *diſpoſition of Heaven* altogether. Indeed, the *plenteous crop* depends ſomewhat on the *good method of tillage*, and where the *land*'s ill manur'd, the *corn*, without a miracle, can be but *indifferent*; but the *harveſt* may be *good*, which is its *propereſt* epithet, tho' the *huſbandman's ſkill* were never ſo *indifferent*.

" *rent.* The next *ſentence* is *too literal,*
" and *when to plough* had been *Virgil's*
" meaning, and intelligible to every
" body; and *when to ſow the corn,* is a
" needleſs *addition.*

Ver. 3. " *The care of ſheep, of oxen,*
" *and of kine, And when to geld the lambs,*
" *and ſheer the ſwine,* would as well have
" fallen under the *cura boum, qui cultus*
" *habendo ſit pecori,* as Mr. *D's deduction*
" of particulars.

Ver. 5. " *The birth and genius of the fru-*
" *gal bee, I ſing,* Mecænas, *and I ſing to thee.*
" —But where did *experientia* ever ſig-
" nify *birth and genius?* or what ground
" was there for ſuch a *figure* in this
" place? How much more manly is
" Mr. *Ogylby's* verſion!

" What

" What makes rich grounds, in what
" celeſtial ſigns,
" 'Tis good to plough, and marry elms
" with vines.
" What beſt fits cattle, what with ſheep
" agrees,
" And ſeveral arts improving frugal
" bees,
" I ſing, *Mecænas.*

" Which four lines, tho' faulty enough,
" are yet much more to the purpoſe
" than Mr. *D's* ſix.

Ver. 22. " *From fields and mountains to*
" *my ſong repair.* For *patrium linquens*
" *nemus, ſaltuſque Lycæi*—Very well ex-
" plain'd!

Ver. 23, 24. " *Inventor* Pallas, *of the* " *fatning oil, Thou founder of the plough,* " *and ploughman's toil!* Written as if " *theſe* had been *Pallas's invention. The* " *ploughman's toil*'s impertinent.

Ver. 25. " *—The ſhroud-like cypreſs—* " Why *ſhroud-like?* Is a *cypreſs* pull'd " up by the *roots*, which the *ſculpture* in " the *laſt Eclogue* fills *Sylvanus's* hand " with ſo very like a *ſhroud?* Or did " not Mr. *D.* think of that kind of *cy-* " *preſs* us'd often for *ſcarves and hat-* " *bands* at funerals formerly, or for " *widow's vails*, &c. if ſo, 'twas a *deep* " *good thought.*

Ver. 26. " *—That wear the royal ho-* " *nours, and increaſe the year*—What's " meant by *increaſing the year?* Did the

" *gods* or *goddeſſes* add more *months*, or " *days*, or *hours* to it? Or how can *arva* " *tueri*—ſignify to *wear rural honours*?- " Is this to *tranſlate*, or *abuſe* an *author*? " The next *couplet* are borrow'd from " *Ogylby*, I ſuppoſe, becauſe *leſs to the* " *purpoſe* than ordinary.

Ver. 33. " *The patron of the world*, " *and* Rome's *peculiar guard*— *Idle*, and " none of *Virgil's*, no more than the " ſenſe of the *precedent couplet*; ſo again, " he *interpolates Virgil* with that and *the* " *round circle of the year to guide power-* " *ful of bleſſings, which thou ſtrew'ſt* " *around*. A ridiculous *Latiniſm*, and " an *impertinent addition*; indeed the " whole *period* is but one piece of *ab-*

" *ſurdity*

" *ſordity* and *nonſenſe*, as thoſe who " lay it with the *original* muſt find.

Ver. 42, 43. " *And* Neptune *ſhall reſign* " *the faſces of the ſea.* Was he *conſul* or " *dictator* there? *And watry virgins for* " *thy bed ſhall ſtrive.* Both abſurd *inter-* " *polations.*

Ver. 47, 48. " *Where in the void of* " *heaven a place is free.* Ah happy *D-n*, " were *that place* for thee! But where " is *that void?* Or what does our *tranſla-* " *tor* mean by it? He knows what *Ovid* " ſays, *God* did to prevent ſuch a *void* " in heaven; perhaps, this was then " forgotten: but *Virgil* talks more ſen- " ſibly.

Ver. 49. " *The ſcorpion ready to re-* " *ceive thy laws.* No, he would not

" then have *gotten out of his way* ſo " faſt.

Ver. 56. " *The Proſerpine affects her* " *ſilent ſeat*—What made *her* then ſo " *angry* with *Aſcalaphus*, for preventing " her return? She was now mus'd to " *Patience* under the *determinations of* " *Fate*, rather than *fond* of her *reſi-* " *dence*.

Ver. 61, 2, 3. " *Pity the poets, and* " *the ploughmans cares, Intereſt thy great-* " *neſs in our mean affairs. And uſe thy-* " *ſelf betimes to hear our prayers.* Which " is ſuch a wretched *perverſion* of *Virgil's* " *noble thought* as *Vicars* would have " bluſh'd at; but Mr. *Ogylby* makes us " ſome amends, by his better lines.

" O where-

" O whereſoe'er thou art, from thence
" incline,
" And grant aſſiſtance to my bold de-
" ſign!
" Pity with me, poor huſbandmens af-
" fairs,
" And now, as if tranſlated, hear our
" prayers.

" This is *ſenſe*, and *to the purpoſe*: the " other, poor *miſtaken ſtuff*."

Such were the ſtrictures of Milbourne, who found few abettors; and of whom it may be reaſonably imagined, that many who favoured his deſign were aſhamed of his inſolence.

When admiration had ſubſided, the tranſlation was more coolly examined,

and found, like all others, to be ſometimes erroneous, and ſometimes licentious. Thoſe who could find faults, thought they could avoid them; and Dr. Brady attempted in blank verſe a tranſlation of the Eneid, which, when dragged into the world, did not live long enough to cry. I have never ſeen it; but that ſuch a verſion there is, or has been, perhaps ſome old catalogue informed me.

With not much better ſucceſs, Trapp, when his Tragedy and his Prelections had given him reputation, attempted another blank verſion of the Eneid; to which, notwithſtanding the ſlight regard with which it was treated, he had afterwards perſeverance enough to add the

Eclogues

Eclogues and Georgicks. His book may continue its exiſtence as long as it is the clandeſtine refuge of ſchoolboys.

Since the Engliſh ear has been accuſtomed to the melliſluence of Pope's numbers, and the diction of poetry has become more ſplendid, new attempts have been made to tranſlate Virgil; and all his works have been attempted by men better qualified to contend with Dryden. I will not engage myſelf in an invidious compariſon, by oppoſing one paſſage to another; a work of which there would be no end, and which might be often offenſive without uſe.

It is not by comparing line with line that the merit of great works is to be eſtimated, but by their general effects and

ultimate reſult. It is eaſy to note a weak line, and write one more vigorous in its place; to find a happineſs of expreſſion in the original, and tranſplant it by force into the verſion: but what is given to the parts, may be ſubducted from the whole, and the reader may be weary, though the critick may commend. Works of imagination excel by their allurement and delight; by their power of attracting and detaining the attention. That book is good in vain, which the reader throws away. He only is the maſter, who keeps the mind in pleaſing captivity; whoſe pages are peruſed with eagerneſs, and in hope of new pleaſure are peruſed again; and whoſe concluſion is perceived with an eye of ſorrow, ſuch as the

the traveller caſts upon departing day.

By his proportion of this predomination I will conſent that Dryden ſhould be tried; of this, which, in oppoſition to reaſon, makes Arioſto the darling and the pride of Italy; of this, which, in defiance of criticiſm, continues Shakeſpeare the ſovereign of the drama.

His laſt work was his *Fables*, in which he gave us the firſt example of a mode of writing which the Italians call *refaccimento*, a renovation of ancient writers, by modernizing their language. Thus the old poem of *Boiardo* has been newdreſſed by *Domenichi* and *Berni*. The works of Chaucer, upon which this kind of rejuveneſcence has been beſtowed

ſtowed by Dryden, require little criticiſm. The tale of the Cock ſeems hardly worth revival; and the ſtory of *Palamon* and *Arcite*, containing an action unſuitable to the times in which it is placed, can hardly be ſuffered to paſs without cenſure of the hyperbolical commendation which Dryden has given it in the general Preface, and in a poetical Dedication, a piece where his original fondneſs of remote conceits ſeems to have revived.

Of the three pieces borrowed from Boccace, *Sigiſmunda* may be defended by the celebrity of the ſtory. *Theodore* and *Honoria*, though it contains not much moral, yet afforded opportunities of ſtriking deſcription. And *Cymon*

was

was formerly a tale of ſuch reputation, that, at the revival of letters, it was tranſlated into Latin by one of the *Beroalds*.

Whatever ſubjects employed his pen, he was ſtill improving our meaſures and embelliſhing our language.

In this volume are interſperſed ſome ſhort original poems, which, with his prologues, epilogues, and ſongs, may be compriſed in Congreve's remark, that even thoſe, if he had written nothing elſe, would have entitled him to the praiſe of excellence in his kind.

One compoſition muſt however be diſtinguiſhed. The ode for *St. Cecilia's* Day, perhaps the laſt effort of his poetry, has been always conſidered as exhi-

exhibiting the higheſt flight of fancy, and the exacteſt nicety of art. This is allowed to ſtand without a rival. If indeed there is any excellence beyond it, in ſome other of Dryden's works that excellence muſt be found. Compared with the Ode on *Killigrew*, it may be pronounced perhaps ſuperiour in the whole; but without any ſingle part, equal to the firſt ſtanza of the other.

It is ſaid to have coſt Dryden a fortnight's labour; but it does not want its negligences: ſome of the lines are without correſpondent rhymes; a defect, which I never detected but after an acquaintance of many years, and which the enthuſiaſm of the writer might hinder him from perceiving.

His

His laſt ſtanza has leſs emotion than the former; but is not leſs elegant in the diction. The concluſion is vitious; the muſick of *Timotheus*, which *raiſed a monarch to the ſkies*, had only a metaphorical power; that of *Cecilia*, which *drew an angel down*, had a real effect: the crown therefore could not reaſonably be divided.

IN a general ſurvey of Dryden's labours, he appears to have had a mind very comprehenſive by nature, and much enriched with acquired knowledge. His compoſitions are the effects of a vigorous genius operating upon large materials.

The power that predominated in his intellectual operations was rather ſtrong rea-

reaſon than quick ſenſibility. Upon all occaſions that were preſented, he ſtudied rather than felt, and produced ſentiments not ſuch as Nature enforces, but meditation ſupplies. With the ſimple and elemental paſſions, as they ſpring ſeparate in the mind, he ſeems not much acquainted; and ſeldom deſcribes them but as they are complicated by the various relations of ſociety, and confuſed in the tumults and agitations of life.

What he ſays of Love may contribute to the explanation of his character:

Love various minds does variouſly inſpire;
It ſtirs in gentle boſoms gentle fire,

Like

Like that of incenſe on the altar laid;
But raging flames tempeſtuous ſouls invade;
A fire which every windy paſſion blows,
With pride it mounts, or with revenge it glows.

Dryden's was not one of the *gentle boſoms*: Love, as it ſubſiſts in itſelf, with no tendency but to the perſon loved, and wiſhing only for correſpondent kindneſs; ſuch love as ſhuts out all other intereſt; the love of the Golden Age, was too ſoft and ſubtle to put his faculties in motion. He hardly conceived it but in its turbulent effervescence with ſome other deſires; when it was inflamed by rivalry, or obſtructed by difficulties; when

when it invigorated ambition, or exaſperated revenge.

He is therefore, with all his variety of excellence, not often pathetick; and had ſo little ſenſibility of the power of effuſions purely natural, that he did not eſteem them in others. Simplicity gave him no pleaſure; and for the firſt part of his life he looked on *Otway* with contempt, though at laſt, indeed very late, he confeſſed that in his play *there was Nature, which is the chief beauty.*

We do not always know our own motives. I am not certain whether it was not rather the difficulty which he found in exhibiting the genuine operations of the heart, than a ſervile ſubmiſſion to an injudicious audience, that filled his

plays

plays with falſe magnificence. It was neceſſary to fix attention; and the mind can be captivated only by recollection, or by curioſity; by reviving former thoughts, or impreſſing new: ſentences were readier at his call than images; he could more eaſily fill the ear with ſome ſplendid novelty, than awaken thoſe ideas that ſlumber in the heart.

The favourite exerciſe of his mind was ratiocination; and, that argument might not be too ſoon at an end, he delighted to talk of liberty and neceſſity, deſtiny and contingence; theſe he diſcuſſes in the language of the ſchool with ſo much profundity, that the terms which he uſes are ſeldom underſtood. It is indeed learning, but learning out of place.

When once he had engaged himſelf in diſputation, thoughts flowed in on either ſide: he was now no longer at a loſs; he had always argument at command; *verbaque proviſam rem*—give him matter for his verſe, and he finds without difficulty verſe for his matter.

In Comedy, for which he profeſſes himſelf not naturally qualified, the mirth which he excites will perhaps not be found ſo much to ariſe from any original humour, or peculiarity of character nicely diſtinguiſhed and diligently purſued, as from incidents and circumſtances, artifices and ſurprizes; from jeſts of action rather than of ſentiment. What he had of humorous or paſſionate, he ſeems to have had not from nature,

but

but from other poets; if not always as a plagiary, at leaſt as an imitator.

Next to argument, his delight was in wild and daring ſallies of ſentiment, in the irregular and excentrick violence of wit. He delighted to tread upon the brink of meaning, where light and darkneſs begin to mingle; to approach the precipice of abſurdity, and hover over the abyſs of unideal vacancy. This inclination ſometimes produced nonſenſe, which he knew; as,

Move ſwiftly, ſun, and fly a lover's pace,
Leave weeks and months behind thee in thy race.

Amariel flies
To guard thee from the demons of the air;
My flaming ſword above them to diſplay,
All keen, and ground upon the edge of day.

And ſometimes it iſſued in abſurdities, of which perhaps he was not conſcious:

Then we upon our orb's laſt verge ſhall go,
And ſee the ocean leaning on the ſky;
From thence our rolling neighbours we ſhall know,
And on the lunar world ſecurely pry.

Theſe lines have no meaning; but may we not ſay, in imitation of Cowley on another book,

'Tis

'Tis ſo like *ſenſe* 'twill ſerve the turn as well?

This endeavour after the grand and the new produced many ſentiments either great or bulky, and many images either juſt or ſplendid:

I am as free as Nature firſt made man,
Ere the baſe laws of ſervitude began,
When wild in woods the noble ſavage ran.

—'Tis but becauſe the Living death ne'er knew,
They fear to prove it as a thing that's new:
Let me th' experiment before you try,
I'll ſhow you firſt how eaſy 'tis to die.

—There with a foreſt of their darts he ſtrove,
And ſtood like *Capaneus* defying Jove;
With his broad ſword the boldeſt beating down,
While Fate grew pale leſt he ſhould win the town,
And turn'd the iron leaves of his dark book
To make new dooms, or mend what it miſtook.

—I beg no pity for this mouldering clay;
For if you give it burial, there it takes
Poſſeſſion of your earth;
If burnt, and ſcatter'd in the air, the winds
That ſtrew my duſt diffuſe my royalty,

And ſpread me o'er your clime; for where one atom
Of mine ſhall light, know there Sebaſtian reigns.

Of theſe quotations the two firſt may be allowed to be great, the two latter only tumid.

Of ſuch ſelection there is no end. I will add only a few more paſſages; of which the firſt, though it may perhaps not be quite clear in proſe, is not too obſcure for poetry, as the meaning that it has is noble:

No, there is a neceſſity in Fate,
Why ſtill the brave bold man is fortunate;
He keeps his object ever full in ſight,
And that aſſurance holds him firm and right;

True, 'tis a narrow way that leads to bliſs,
But right before there is no precipice;
Fear makes men look aſide, and ſo their footing miſs.

Of the images which the two following citations afford, the firſt is elegant, the ſecond magnificent; whether either be juſt, let the reader judge:

What precious drops are theſe,
Which ſilently each other's track purſue,
Bright as young diamonds in their infant dew?

—Reſign your caſtle—
—Enter, brave Sir; for when you ſpeak the word,
The gates ſhall open of their own accord;

The genius of the place its Lord ſhall
meet,
And bow its towery forehead at your
feet.

Theſe burſts of extravagance, Dryden calls the *Dalilahs* of the Theatre; and owns that many noiſy lines of Maximin and Almanzor call out for vengeance upon him; but *I knew*, ſays he, *that they were bad enough to pleaſe, even when I wrote them.* There is ſurely reaſon to ſuſpect that he pleaſed himſelf as well as his audience; and that theſe, like the harlots of other men, had his love, though not his approbation.

He had ſometimes faults of a leſs generous and ſplendid kind. He makes, like

like almoſt all other poets, very frequent uſe of Mythology, and ſometimes connects religion and fable too cloſely, without diſtinction.

He deſcends to diſplay his knowledge with pedantick oſtentation; as when, in tranſlating Virgil, he ſays, *tack to the larboard*—and *veer ſtarboard*; and talks in another work of *virtue ſpooming before the wind*. His vanity now and then betrays his ignorance:

They Nature's king thro' Nature's opticks view'd;
Revers'd they view'd him leſſen'd to their eyes.

He had heard of reverſing a teleſcope, and unluckily reverſes the object.

He

He is ſometimes unexpectedly mean. When he deſcribes the Supreme Being as moved by prayer to ſtop the Fire of London, what is his expreſſion?

A hollow cryſtal pyramid he takes,
In firmamental waters dipp'd above,
Of this a broad *extinguiſher* he makes,
And *hoods* the flames that to their quarry ſtrove.

When he deſcribes the Laſt Day, and the deciſive tribunal, he intermingles this image:

When rattling bones together fly,
From the four quarters of the ſky.

It was indeed never in his power to reſiſt the temptation of a jeſt. In his Elegy on Cromwel:

No

No ſooner was the Frenchman's cauſe
embrac'd,
Than the *light Monſieur* the *grave Don*
outweigh'd;
His fortune turn'd the ſcale—

He had a vanity unworthy of his abilities; to ſhew, as may be ſuſpected, the rank of the company with whom he lived, by the uſe of French words, which had then crept into converſation; ſuch as *fraicheur* for *coolneſs*, *fougue* for *turbulence*, and a few more, none of which the language has incorporated or retained. They continue only where they ſtood firſt, perpetual warnings to future innovators.

Theſe are his faults of affectation; his faults of negligence are beyond recital.

cital. Such is the unevenneſs of his compoſitions, that ten lines are ſeldom found together without ſomething of which the reader is aſhamed. Dryden was no rigid judge of his own pages; he ſeldom ſtruggled after ſupreme excellence, but ſnatched in haſte what was within his reach, and when he could content others was himſelf contented. He did not keep preſent to his mind an idea of pure perfection, nor compare his works, ſuch as they were, with what they might be made. He knew to whom he ſhould be oppoſed. He had more muſick than Waller, more vigour than Denham, and more nature than Cowley; and from his contemporaries he was in no danger. Standing there-

therefore in the higheſt place, he had no care to riſe by contending with himſelf; but while there was no name above his own, was willing to enjoy fame on the eaſieſt terms.

He was no lover of labour. What he thought ſufficient, he did not ſtop to make better; and allowed himſelf to leave many parts unfiniſhed, in confidence that the good lines would overbalance the bad. What he had once written, he diſmiſſed from his thoughts; and, I believe, there is no example to be found of any correction or improvement made by him after publication. The haſtineſs of his productions might be the effect of neceſſity; but his ſubſequent neglect could hardly have any

any other cauſe than impatience of ſtudy.

What can be ſaid of his verſification, will be little more than a dilatation of the praiſe given it by Pope.

> Waller was ſmooth; but Dryden taught to join
> The varying verſe, the full-reſounding line,
> The long majeſtick march, and energy divine.

Some improvements had been already made in Engliſh numbers; but the full force of our language was not yet felt; the verſe that was ſmooth was commonly feeble. If Cowley had ſometimes a finiſhed line, he had it by chance. Dryden knew how to chuſe the flowing and

the ſonorous words; to vary the pauſes, and adjuſt the accents; to diverſify the cadence, and yet preſerve the ſmoothneſs of his metre.

Of Triplets and Alexandrines, though he did not introduce the uſe, he eſtabliſhed it. The triplet has long ſubſiſted among us. Dryden ſeems not to have traced it higher than to Chapman's Homer; but it is to be found in Phaer's Virgil, written in the reign of Mary, and in Hall's Satires, publiſhed five years before the death of Elizabeth.

The Alexandrine was, I believe, firſt uſed by Spenſer, for the ſake of cloſing his ſtanza with a fuller ſound. We had a longer meaſure of fourteen ſyllables, into which the Eneid was tranſlated by Phaer,

Phaer, and other works of the ancients by other writers; of which Chapman's Iliad was, I believe, the laſt.

The two firſt lines of *Phaer's* third Eneid will exemplify this meaſure:

When Aſia's ſtate was overthrown, and
Priam's kingdom ſtout,
All giltleſs, by the power of gods above
was rooted out.

As theſe lines had their break, or *cæſura*, always at the eighth ſyllable, it was thought in time commodious to divide them; and quatrains of lines, alternately conſiſting of eight and ſix ſyllables, make the moſt ſoft and pleaſing of our lyrick meaſures; as,

Relentleſs Time, deſtroying power,
Which ſtone and braſs obey,
Who giv'ſt to every flying hour
To work ſome new decay.

In the Alexandrine, when its power was once felt, ſome poems, as *Drayton's Polyolbion*, were wholly written; and ſometimes the meaſures of twelve and fourteen ſyllables were interchanged with one another. Cowley was the firſt that inſerted the Alexandrine at pleaſure among the heroick lines of ten ſyllables, and from him Dryden profeſſes to have adopted it.

The Triplet and Alexandrine are not univerſally approved. *Swift* always cenſured them, and wrote ſome lines to ridicule

ridicule them. In examining their propriety, it is to be conſidered that the eſſence of verſe is regularity, and its ornament is variety. To write verſe is to diſpoſe ſyllables and ſounds harmonically by ſome known and ſettled rule; a rule however lax enough to ſubſtitute ſimilitude for identity, to admit change without breach of order, and to relieve the ear without diſappointing it. Thus a Latin hexameter is formed from dactyls and ſpondees differently combined; the Engliſh heroick admits of acute or grave ſyllables variouſly diſpoſed. The Latin never deviates into ſeven feet, or exceeds the number of ſeventeen ſyllables; but the Engliſh Alexandrine breaks the lawful bounds, and ſurpriſes the

reader with two ſyllables more than he expected.

The effect of the Triplet is the ſame: the ear has been accuſtomed to expect a new rhyme in every couplet; but is on a ſudden ſurpriſed with three rhymes together, to which the reader could not accommodate his voice, did he not obtain notice of the change from the braces on the margins. Surely there is ſomething unſkilful in the neceſſity of ſuch mechanical direction.

Conſidering the metrical art ſimply as a ſcience, and conſequently excluding all caſualty, we muſt allow that Triplets and Alexandrines inſerted by caprice are interruptions of that conſtancy to which ſcience aſpires. And though the

variety which they produce may very juſtly be deſired, yet to make our poetry exact there ought to be ſome ſtated mode of admitting them.

But till ſome ſuch regulation can be formed, I wiſh them ſtill to be retained in their preſent ſtate. They are ſometimes grateful to the reader, and ſometimes convenient to the poet. *Fenton* was of opinion that Dryden was too liberal and Pope too ſparing in their uſe.

The rhymes of Dryden are commonly juſt, and he valued himſelf for his readineſs in finding them; but he is ſometimes open to objection.

It is the common practice of our poets to end the ſecond line with a weak or grave ſyllable:

Together o'er the Alps methinks we fly,
Fill'd with ideas of fair *Italy*.

Dryden ſometimes puts the weak rhyme in the firſt:

Laugh all the powers that favour *tyranny*,
And all the ſtanding army of the ſky.

Sometimes he concludes a period or paragraph with the firſt line of a couplet, which, though the French ſeem to do it without irregularity, always diſpleaſes in Engliſh poetry.

The Alexandrine, though much his favourite, is not always very diligently fabricated by him. It invariably requires a break at the ſixth ſyllable; a rule which the modern French poets never violate, but which Dryden ſometimes neglected:

And

And with paternal thunder vindicates
his throne.

Of Dryden's works it was ſaid by Pope, that *he could ſelect from them better ſpecimens of every mode of poetry than any other Engliſh writer could ſupply.* Perhaps no nation ever produced a writer that enriched his language with ſuch variety of models. To him we owe the improvement, perhaps the completion of our metre, the refinement of our language, and much of the correctneſs of our ſentiments. By him we were taught *ſapere & fari*, to think naturally and expreſs forcibly. He taught us that it was poſſible to reaſon in rhyme. He ſhewed us the true bounds of a tranſlator's liberty. What was ſaid of Rome,

adorned by Auguſtus, may be applied by an eaſy metaphor to Engliſh poetry embelliſhed by Dryden, *lateritiam invenit, marmoream reliquit*, he found it brick, and he left it marble.

THE invocation before the Georgicks is here inſerted from Mr. Milbourne's verſion, that, according to his own propoſal, his verſes may be compared with thoſe which he cenſures.

What makes the richeſt *tilth*, beneath what ſigns
To *plough*, and when to match your *elms* and *vines*?
What care with *flocks* and what with *herds* agrees,
And all the management of frugal *bees*,
I ſing, *Mæcenas!* Ye immenſely clear,
Vaſt orbs of light which guide the rolling year;

Bacchus, and mother *Ceres*, if by you
We fat'ning *corn* for hungry *maſt* purſue,
If, taught by you, we firſt the *cluſter* preſt,
And *thin cold ſtreams* with *ſpritely juice* refreſht.
Ye *fawns* the preſent *numens* of the field,
Wood nymphs and *fawns*, your kind aſſiſtance yield,
Your gifts I ſing! and thou, at whoſe fear'd ſtroke
From rending earth the fiery *courſer* broke,
Great *Neptune*, O aſſiſt my artful ſong!
And thou to whom the woods and groves belong,
Whoſe ſnowy heifers on her flow'ry plains
In mighty herds the *Cæan Iſle* maintains!
Pan, happy ſhepherd, if thy cares divine,
E'er to improve thy *Mœnalus* incline;
Leave thy *Lycæan wood* and *native grove*,
And with thy lucky ſmiles our work approve!
Be *Pallas* too, ſweet oils inventor, kind;
And he, who firſt the crooked *plough* deſign'd!
Sylvanus, god of all the woods appear,
Whoſe hands a new-drawn tender *cypreſs* bear!

Ye

Ye *gods* and *goddeſſes* who e'er with love,
Would guard our paſtures, and our fields improve!
You, who new plants from unſown lands ſupply;
And with condenſing clouds obſcure the ſky,
And drop 'em ſoftly thence in fruitful ſhowers,
Aſſiſt my enterprize, ye gentler powers!
And thou, great *Cæſar!* tho' we know not yet
Among what gods thou'lt fix thy lofty ſeat,
Whether thou'lt be the kind *tutelar god*
Of thy own *Rome*; or with thy awful nod,
Guide the vaſt world, while thy great hand ſhall bear,
The fruits and ſeaſons of the turning year,
And thy bright brows thy mother's myrtles wear:
Whether thou'lt all the boundleſs ocean ſway,
And ſea-men only to thyſelf ſhall pray,
Thule, the fartheſt iſland kneel to thee,
And, that thou may'ſt her ſon by marriage be,

Tethys

Tethys will for the happy purchaſe yield
To make a *dowry* of her watry field;
Whether thou'lt add to heaven a *brighter ſign*,
And o'er the *ſummer months* ſerenely ſhine;
Where between *Cancer* and *Erigone*,
There yet remains a ſpacious *room* for thee.
Where the hot *Scorpion* too his arms declines,
And more to thee than half his *arch* reſigns;
Whate'er thou'lt be; for ſure the realms below
No juſt pretence to thy command can ſhow:
No ſuch ambition ſways thy vaſt deſires,
Tho' *Greece* her own *Elyſian Fields* admires.
And now, at laſt, contented *Proſerpine*
Can all her mother's earneſt prayers decline.
Whate'er thou'lt be, O guide our gentle courſe,
And with thy ſmiles our bold attempts enforce;
With me th' unknowing *ruſtics* wants relieve,
And, tho' on earth, our ſacred vows receive!

Mr.

Mr. Dryden, having received from Rymer his *Remarks on the Tragedies of the laſt Age*, wrote obſervations on the blank leaves; which, being now in the poſſeſſion of Mr. Garrick, are by his favour communicated to the publick, that no particle of Dryden may be loſt.

" That we may the leſs wonder why " pity and terror are not now the only " ſprings on which our tragedies move, " and that Shakeſpeare may be more ex- " cuſed, Rapin confeſſes that the French " tragedies now all run on the *tendre*; " and gives the reaſon, becauſe love is " the

"the paſſion which moſt predominates
"in our ſouls, and that therefore the
"paſſions repreſented become inſipid,
"unleſs they are conformable to the
"thoughts of the audience. But it is
"to be concluded that this paſſion works
"not now amongſt the French ſo ſtrong-
"ly as the other two did amongſt the
"ancients. Amongſt us, who have a
"ſtronger genius for writing, the ope-
"rations from the writing are much
"ſtronger: for the raiſing of Shake-
"ſpeare's paſſions is more from the ex-
"cellency of the words and thoughts
"than the juſtneſs of the occaſion; and
"if he has been able to pick ſingle oc-
"caſions, he has never founded the whole

"rea-

" reaſonably: yet, by the genius of " poetry in writing, he has ſucceeded.

" Rapin attributes more to the *dictio*, " that is, to the words and diſcourſe of " a tragedy, than Ariſtotle has done, " who places them in the laſt rank of " beauties; perhaps, only laſt in order, " becauſe they are the laſt product of " the deſign, of the diſpoſition or con- " nection of its parts; of the characters, " of the manners of thoſe characters, " and of the thoughts proceeding from " thoſe manners. Rapin's words are re- " markable: 'Tis not the admirable in- " trigue, the ſurpriſing events, and ex- " traordinary incidents, that make the " beauty of a tragedy; 'tis the diſ-

" courſes, when they are natural and " paſſionate: ſo are Shakeſpeare's.

" The parts of a poem, tragic or he- " roick, are,

" 1. The fable itſelf.

" 2. The order or manner of its con- " trivance, in relation of the parts to " the whole.

" 3. The manners, or decency of the " characters in ſpeaking or acting what " is proper for them, and proper to be " ſhewn by the poet.

" 4. The thoughts which expreſs the " manners.

" 5. The words which expreſs thoſe " thoughts.

" In

" In the laſt of theſe, Homer excels " Virgil; Virgil all other ancient poets; " and Shakeſpeare all modern poets.

" For the ſecond of theſe, the order: " the meaning is, that a fable ought to " have a beginning, middle, and an end, " all juſt and natural: ſo that that part, " *e. g.* which is the middle, could not " naturally be the beginning or end, and " ſo of the reſt: all depend on one ano- " ther, like the links of a curious chain. " If terror and pity are only to be " raiſed, certainly this author follows " Ariſtotle's rules, and Sophocles' and " Euripides's example: but joy may be " raiſed too, and that doubly; either " by ſeeing a wicked man puniſhed, or " a good man at laſt fortunate; or per-

" haps

"haps indignation, to ſee wickedneſs "proſperous and goodneſs depreſſed: "both theſe may be profitable to the "end of tragedy, reformation of man-"ners; but the laſt improperly, only as "it begets pity in the audience: tho' "Ariſtotle, I confeſs, places tragedies "of this kind in the ſecond form.

"He who undertakes to anſwer this "excellent critique of Mr. Rymer, in "behalf of our Engliſh poets againſt "the Greek, ought to do it in this man-"ner. Either by yielding to him the "greateſt part of what he contends for, "which conſiſts in this, that the μύθος, "*i. e.* the deſign and conduct of it, is "more conducing in the Greeks to thoſe "ends of tragedy, which Ariſtotle and

" he propoſe, namely, to cauſe terror " and pity; yet the granting this does " not ſet the Greeks above the Engliſh " poets.

" But the anſwerer ought to prove " two things: firſt, that the fable is not " the greateſt maſter-piece of a tragedy, " tho' it be the foundation of it.

" Secondly, That other ends as ſuitable " to the nature of tragedy may be found " in the Engliſh, which were not in the " Greek.

" Ariſtotle places the fable firſt; not " *quoad dignitatem, ſed quoad fundamen-* " *tum:* for a fable, never ſo movingly " contrived to thoſe ends of his, pity " and terror, will operate nothing on " our affections, except the characters,

" man-

" manners, thoughts, and words, are
" ſuitable.

" So that it remains for Mr. Rymer
" to prove, that in all thoſe, or the
" greateſt part of them, we are inferior
" to Sophocles and Euripides: and this
" he has offered at, in ſome meaſure;
" but, I think, a little partially to the
" ancients.

" For the fable itſelf; 'tis in the Eng-
" liſh more adorned with epiſodes, and
" larger than in the Greek poets; con-
" ſequently more diverting. For, if the
" action be but one, and that plain,
" without any counter-turn of deſign or
" epiſode, *i. e.* under-plot, how can it
" be ſo pleaſing as the Engliſh, which
" have both under-plot and a turned de-

"ſign, which keeps the audience in "expectation of the cataſtrophe? where, "as in the Greek poets we ſee through "the whole deſign at firſt.

"For the characters, they are neither "ſo many nor ſo various in Sophocles "and Euripides, as in Shakeſpeare and "Fletcher; only they are more adapted "to thoſe ends of tragedy which Ariſ- "totle commends to us, pity and ter- "rour.

"The manners flow from the charac- "ters, and conſequently muſt partake "of their advantages and diſadvan- "tages.

"The thoughts and words, which are "the fourth and fifth beauties of tra- "gedy, are certainly more noble and

"more

" more poetical in the Engliſh than in
" the Greek, which muſt be proved by
" comparing them, ſomewhat more
" equitably than Mr. Rymer has done.

" After all, we need not yield that
" the Engliſh way is leſs conducing to
" move pity and terror, becauſe they
" often ſhew virtue oppreſſed and vice
" puniſhed: where they do not both,
" or either, they are not to be de-
" fended.

" And if we ſhould grant that the
" Greeks performed this better, perhaps
" it may admit of diſpute whether pity
" and terror are either the prime, or at
" leaſt the only ends of tragedy.

" 'Tis not enough that Ariſtotle has
" ſaid ſo; for Ariſtotle drew his models

" of tragedy from Sophocles and Euri
" pides; and, if he had ſeen ours, might
" have changed his mind. And chiefly
" we have to ſay (what I hinted on
" pity and terror, in the laſt paragraph
" ſave one), that the puniſhment of vice
" and reward of virtue are the moſt ade-
" quate ends of tragedy, becauſe moſt
" conducing to good example of life.
" Now pity is not ſo eaſily raiſed for a
" criminal, and the ancient tragedy al-
" ways repreſents its chief perſon ſuch,
" as it is for an innocent man; and the
" ſuffering of innocence and puniſhment
" of the offender is of the nature of
" Engliſh tragedy: contrarily, in the
" Greek, innocence is unhappy often,
" and the offender eſcapes. Then we
" are

"are not touched with the ſufferings of "any ſort of men ſo much as of lovers; "and this was almoſt unknown to the "ancients: ſo that they neither admi- "niſtered poetical juſtice, of which Mr. "Rymer boaſts, ſo well as we; neither "knew they the beſt common place of "pity, which is love.

"He therefore unjuſtly blames us "for not building on what the ancients "left us; for it ſeems, upon conſidera- "tion of the premiſes, that we have "wholly finiſhed what they began.

"My judgement on this piece is this, "that it is extreamly learned; but that "the author of it is better read in the "Greek than in the Engliſh poets: that "all writers ought to ſtudy this critique,

" as the beſt account I have ever ſeen of " the ancients: that the model of tra- " gedy he has here given is excellent, " and extreme correct; but that it is " not the only model of all tragedy, be- " cauſe it is too much circumſcribed in " plot, characters, &c. and laſtly, that " we may be taught here juſtly to ad- " mire and imitate the ancients, with- " out giving them the preference with " this author, in prejudice to our own " country.

" Want of method in this excellent " treatiſe, makes the thoughts of the " author ſometimes obſcure.

" His meaning, that pity and terror " are to be moved, is, that they are to " be moved as the means conducing to

" the

" the ends of tragedy, which are plea-
" ſure and inſtruction.

" And theſe two ends may be thus
" diſtinguiſhed. The chief end of the
" poet is to pleaſe; for his immediate
" reputation depends on it.

" The great end of the poem is to
" inſtruct, which is performed by making
" pleaſure the vehicle of that inſtruction;
" for poeſy is an art, and all arts are
" made to profit. *Rapin.*

" The pity, which the poet is to la-
" bour for, is for the criminal, not for
" thoſe or him whom he has murdered,
" or who have been the occaſion of the
" tragedy. The terror is likewiſe in
" the puniſhment of the ſame criminal;
" who, if he be repreſented too great an

" offen-

" offender, will not be pitied: if alto-
" gether innocent, his puniſhment will
" be unjuſt.

" Another obſcurity is, where he ſays
" Sophocles perfected tragedy by intro-
" ducing the third actor; that is, he
" meant, three kinds of action; one
" company ſinging, or another playing
" on the muſick; a third dancing.

" To make a true judgement in this
" competition betwixt the Greek poets
" and the Engliſh, in tragedy:

" Conſider, firſt, how Ariſtotle has de-
" fined a tragedy. Secondly, what he
" aſſigns the end of it to be. Thirdly,
" what he thinks the beauties of it.
" Fourthly, the means to attain the end
" propoſed.

" Com-

" Compare the Greek and Engliſh " tragick poets juſtly, and without par- " tiality, according to thoſe rules.

" Then, ſecondly, conſider whether " Ariſtotle has made a juſt definition of " tragedy; of its parts, of its ends, " and of its beauties; and whether he, " having not ſeen any others but thoſe " of Sophocles, Euripides, &c. had or " truly could determine what all the " excellencies of tragedy are, and where- " in they conſiſt.

" Next ſhew in what ancient tragedy " was deficient: for example, in the " narrowneſs of its plots, and fewneſs of " perſons, and try whether that be not " a fault in the Greek poets; and whe- " ther their excellency was ſo great,

" when

" when the variety was visibly so little;
" or whether what they did was not very
" easy to do.

" Then make a judgement on what
" the English have added to their beau-
" ties: as, for example, not only more
" plot, but also new passions; as, name-
" ly, that of love, scarce touched on by
" the ancients, except in this one ex-
" ample of Phædra, cited by Mr. Ry-
" mer; and in that how short they were
" of Fletcher!

" Prove also that love, being an he-
" roick passion, is fit for tragedy, which
" cannot be denied, because of the
" example alleged of Phædra; and
" how far Shakespeare has outdone them
" in friendship, &c.

" To

" To return to the beginning of this " enquiry; conſider if pity and terror " be enough for tragedy to move: and " I believe, upon a true definition of " tragedy, it will be found that its work " extends farther; and that it is to re- " form manners, by a delightful repre- " ſentation of human life in great per- " ſons, by way of dialogue. If this be " true, then not only pity and terror " are to be moved, as the only means " to bring us to virtue, but generally " love to virtue and hatred to vice; by " ſhewing the rewards of one, and pu- " niſhments of the other; at leaſt, by " by rendering virtue always amiable, " tho' it be ſhewn unfortunate; and vice " deteſtable, tho' it be ſhewn triumphant.

" If,

" If, then, the encouragement of vir-
" tue and diſcouragement of vice be the
" proper ends of poetry in tragedy, pity
" and terrour, tho' good means, are not
" the only. For all the paſſions, in
" their turns, are to be ſet in a ferment:
" as joy, anger, love, fear, are to be
" uſed as the poet's common-places;
" and a general concernment for the
" principal actors is to be raiſed, by
" making them appear ſuch in their
" characters, their words, and actions,
" as will intereſt the audience in their
" fortunes.

" And if, after all, in a larger ſenſe,
" pity comprehends this concernment
" for the good, and terror includes de-
" teſtation for the bad, then let us con-
" ſider

" ſider whether the Engliſh have not
" anſwered this end of tragedy, as well
" as the ancients, or perhaps better.

" And here Mr. Rymer's objections
" againſt theſe plays are to be impar-
" tially weighed, that we may ſee whe-
" ther they are of weight enough to
" turn the balance againſt our country-
" men.

" 'Tis evident thoſe plays, which he
" arraigns, have moved both thoſe paſ-
" ſions in a high degree upon the ſtage.

" To give the glory of this away from
" the poet, and to place it upon the
" actors, ſeems unjuſt.

" One reaſon is, becauſe whatever ac-
" tors they have found, the event has
" been the ſame; that is, the ſame paſ-

" ſions

"ſions have been always moved; which "ſhews, that there is ſomething of "force and merit in the plays them-"themſelves, conducing to the deſign of "raiſing theſe two paſſions: and ſup-"poſe them ever to have been excel-"lently acted, yet action only adds "grace, vigour, and more life, upon "the ſtage; but cannot give it wholly "where is is not firſt. But, ſecondly, I "dare appeal to thoſe who have never "ſeen them acted, if they have not "found theſe two paſſions moved within "them: and if the general voice will "carry it, Mr. Rymer's prejudice will "take off his ſingle teſtimony.

"This, being matter of fact, is rea-"ſonably to be eſtabliſhed by this ap-

"peal;

"peal: as if one man ſays 'tis night,
"the reſt of the world conclude it to
"be day; there needs no farther argu-
"ment againſt him, that it is ſo.

"If he urge, that the general taſte
"is depraved, his arguments to prove
"this can at beſt but evince that our
"poets took not the beſt way to raiſe
"thoſe paſſions; but experience proves
"againſt him, that theſe means, which
"they have uſed, have been ſucceſsful,
"and have produced them.

"And one reaſon of that ſucceſs is,
"in my opinion, this, that Shakeſpeare
"and Fletcher have written to the ge-
"nius of the age and nation in which
"they lived; for though nature, as he
"objects, is the ſame in all places, and

" reaſon too the ſame; yet the climate,
" the age, the diſpoſition of the people,
" to whom a poet writes, may be ſo dif-
" ferent, that what pleaſed the Greeks
" would not ſatisfy an Engliſh au-
" dience.

" And if they proceeded upon a foun-
" dation of truer reaſon to pleaſe the
" Athenians than Shakeſpeare and Flet-
" cher to pleaſe the Engliſh, it only
" ſhews that the Athenians were a more
" judicious people; but the poet's buſi-
" neſs is certainly to pleaſe the au-
" dience.

" Whether our Engliſh audience have
" been pleaſed hitherto with acorns, as
" he calls it, or with bread, is the next
" queſtion; that is, whether the means

" which

"which Shakeſpeare and Fletcher have "uſed in their plays to raiſe thoſe paſ- "ſions before named, be better applied "to the ends by the Greek poets than "by them. And perhaps we ſhall not "grant him this wholly: let it be "granted that a writer is not to run "down with the ſtream, or to pleaſe "the people by their own uſual me- "thods, but rather to reform their "judgements, it ſtill remains to prove "that our theatre needs this total re- "formation.

"The faults, which he has found in "their deſigns, are rather wittily ag- "gravated in many places than rea- "ſonably urged; and as much may be

"returned on the Greeks, by one who
"were as witty as himſelf.

"2. They deſtroy not, if they are
"granted, the foundation of the fa-
"brick; only take away from the beau-
"ty of the ſymmetry: for example,
"the faults in the character of the King
"and No-king are not as he makes
"them, ſuch as render him deteſtable,
"but only imperfections which accompa-
"ny human nature, and are for the moſt
"part excuſed by the violence of his
"love; ſo that they deſtroy not our pity
"or concernment for him: this anſwer
"may be applied to moſt of his objec-
"tions of that kind.

"And Rollo committing many mur-
"ders, when he is anſwerable but for
"one,

" one, is too ſeverely arraigned by him;
" for it adds to our horror and deteſta-
" tion of the criminal: and poetick juſ-
" tice is not neglected neither; for we
" ſtab him in our minds for every of-
" fence which he commits; and the
" point, which the poet is to gain on
" the audience, is not ſo much in the
" death of an offender as the raiſing an
" horror of his crimes.

" That the criminal ſhould neither
" be wholly guilty, nor wholly inno-
" cent, but ſo participating of both as
" to move both pity and terror, is cer-
" tainly a good rule, but not perpetual-
" ly to be obſerved; for that were to
" make all tragedies too much alike,

" which objection he foreſaw, but has " not fully anſwered.

" To conclude, therefore; if the plays " of the ancients are more correctly " plotted, ours are more beautifully " written. And if we can raiſe paſſions " as high on worſe foundations, it ſhews " our genius in tragedy is greater; for, " in all other parts of it, the Engliſh " have manifeſtly excelled them."

THE original of the following letter is preſerved in the library at Lambeth, and was kindly imparted to the publick by the reverend Dr. Vyſe.

Copy

Copy of an original Letter from John Dryden, Eſq; to his ſons in Italy, From a MS in the Lambeth Library, marked N°. 933. p. 56.

(*Superſcribed*)

Al Illuſtriſſimo Sig^re

Carlo Dryden Camariere

d' Honore A. S. S.

In Roma.

Franca per Mantoua.

" Sept. the 3d, our ſtile.

" Dear Sons,

" Being now at Sir William Bowyer's " in the country, I cannot write at large,

" becauſe I find myſelf ſomewhat indiſ-
" poſed with a cold, and am thick of
" hearing, rather worſe than I was in
" town. I am glad to find, by your
" letter of July 26th, your ſtile, that
" you are both in health; but wonder
" you ſhould think me ſo negligent as
" to forget to give you an account of
" the ſhip in which your parcel is to
" come. I have written to you two or
" three letters concerning it, which I
" have ſent by ſafe hands, as I told you,
" and doubt not but you have them,
" before this can arrive to you. Being
" out of town, I have forgotten the ſhip's
" name, which your mother will en-
" quire, and put it into her letter,
" which is joined with mine. But the
" maſ-

" maſter's name I remember: he is
" called Mr. Ralph Thorp; the ſhip is
" bound to Leghorn, conſigned to Mr.
" Peter and Mr. Tho. Ball, merchants.
" I am of your opinion, that by Ton-
" ſon's means almoſt all our letters have
" miſcarried for this laſt year. But how-
" ever he has miſſed of his deſign in
" the Dedication, though he had pre-
" pared the book for it; for in every
" figure of Eneas he has cauſed him to
" be drawn, like K. William, with a
" hooked noſe. After my return to
" town, I intend to alter a play of Sir
" Robert Howard's, written long ſince,
" and lately put by him into my hands:
" 'tis called the *Conqueſt of China by the*
" *Tartars*. It will coſt me ſix weeks
" ſtudy,

" ſtudy, with the probable benefit of
" an hundred pounds. In the mean
" time I am writing a ſong for St. Ceci-
" lia's Feaſt, who, you know, is the pa-
" troneſs of muſick. This is trouble-
" ſome, and no way beneficial; but I
" could not deny the Stewards of the
" Feaſt, who came in a body to me to
" deſire that kindneſs, one of them being
" Mr. Bridgman, whoſe parents are your
" mother's friends. I hope to ſend
" you thirty guineas between Michael-
" maſs and Chriſtmaſs, of which I will
" give you an account when I come
" to town. I remember the counſel
" you give me in your letter; but
" diſſembling, though lawful in ſome
" caſes,

"caſes, is not my talent; yet, for "your ſake, I will ſtruggle with the "plain openneſs of my nature, and "keep in my juſt reſentments againſt "that degenerate order. In the mean "time, I flatter not myſelf with any "manner of hopes, but do my duty, "and ſuffer for God's ſake; being aſ-"ſured, beforehand, never to be re-"warded, though the times ſhould al-"ter. Towards the latter end of this "month, September, Charles will be-"gin to recover his perfect health, "according to his nativity, which, "caſting it myſelf, I am ſure is true, "and all things hitherto have hap-"pened accordingly to the very time "that

"that I predicted them: I hope at "the ſame time to recover more health, "according to my age. Remember "me to poor Harry, whoſe prayers "I earneſtly deſire. My Virgil ſuc-"ceeds in the world beyond its deſert "or my expectation. You know the "profits might have been more; but "neither my conſcience nor my honour "would ſuffer me to take them: but "I never can repent of my conſtancy, "ſince I am thoroughly perſuaded of "the juſtice of the cauſe for which "I ſuffer. It has pleaſed God to raiſe "up many friends to me amongſt my "enemies, though they who ought to "have been my friends are negligent

"of me. I am called to dinner, and
"cannot go on with this letter, which
"I desire you to excuse; and am

"Your most affectionate father

"JOHN DRYDEN."